

January 5, 2012

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I have had the pleasure and privilege of sharing NCH's weekly progress in *Straight Talk* over these past five years. It has been our custom to begin the New Year with predictions of what we might encounter in the year about to unfold. Here are three predictions that can't miss in 2012.

- **First, NCH as medical destination and economic engine.**

Slowly but surely, NCH is becoming a medical destination, where one in eight patients comes from outside our five-county region for cardiac care, total joint replacements, and general medical care. These are people seeking out NCH because of its reputation for compassionate care and clinical excellence. For example, people come here because we rank in the top 10% for cardiac surgery, according to the Society of Thoracic Surgery.

This trend has enormous potential impact for our state and local economies, which, as we all know, have suffered during our nation's economic downturn. Healthcare in southwest Florida in general and NCH in particular must serve as an economic engine which powers vigorous and sustainable growth. So the faster we grow our national reputation as a "destination hospital," the better it will be—not only for all of us who provide care but also for the broader community. Being busier year-round will also improve our quality and access, by enhancing efficiency and more effectively using our capacity. In 2012, a push to extend our national reputation as a medical attraction should yield significant related benefits.

- **Second, NCH to create a Health Information Exchange for all to use.**

Consistent with growing our healthcare economy is erecting a network to facilitate the exchange of electronic medical records so that NCH medical practitioners and their patients—regardless of whether they're local or out-of-state or even overseas—have seamless access to their records. This will improve the value of the healthcare we deliver, as it means better quality care at a lower cost for everyone. We can all look forward to the day when "scavenger hunting" for old test results and x-rays and "memory games" about prior medications are a thing of the past. At NCH, we are well on the way to making electronic record-keeping a reality.

- **Third, NCH will continue to add value through growth.**

As of today, we have just grown to 715 beds, as we opened the 6th floor of the Baker Tower at our North Naples Hospital campus. In the year ahead, we will continue to add services that will keep us at the leading edge of healthcare delivery, including growing outside our four walls to address our community's healthcare needs.

The hard reality for Floridians is that we no longer can count on the prior engines of economic growth—tourism, construction, real estate, etc.—to provide the growth we need going forward. Rather, we must turn to areas such as healthcare as a source of local economic growth, improved standard of living for our residents, and sustainability and expansion of our region.

So in the year 2012, look for NCH to work toward being a medical destination, creating a health information exchange for everyone to utilize, and continuing to expand and grow as a vital economic engine for the region we serve.

Respectfully,



Allen S. Weiss, M.D., President and CEO

P.S. Feel free to share *Straight Talk* and ask anyone to email me at allen.weiss@nchmd.org to be added.