

January 12, 2012

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Even in today's rapidly-changing environment, the special bond between patient and physician remains the core connection in delivering quality healthcare.

I was vividly reminded of this as I read a recent correspondence between patient Mollie Ottina and physician **Dr. Ashley Tunkle**, both of whom gave me permission to share their communication after I had the pleasure of making the referral. Here's what Mollie wrote:

*Dear Allen,*

*What a find is Ashley Tunkle! Thank you so very much for asking her to accept me as a patient. I know now that when I am sick I am going to have a doctor who will see me and will care about me. She is thoughtful, considerate, caring, very intelligent and observant and so young and vibrant! To find all these qualities in a single physician is rather close to a miracle.*

*She is the proven product of your comments about the NCH Medical staff in your [recent Straight Talk](#), and I have only spent around 20 minutes w/her. I could not believe that she took the time to learn about my medical history and to show that she cares. For the first time in my life, I wrote a letter to a doctor telling her how much it means to me that she will be my doctor. I am sure she will keep up w/each and every one of the specialists I see to be sure that she always knows my total medical picture; well, maybe she will skip the ortho!*

*Happiest of Holidays and my deep and sincere thanks, Mollie.*

As a hospital administrator, it doesn't get much better than that kind of praise for a caring physician. In her note, Mollie also alluded to the new reality in modern healthcare—a patient's relationship with additional "specialists" beyond the primary physician.

Today's more sophisticated healthcare system introduces patients to many highly-trained, highly-educated, highly-caring specialists, each focused on one particular aspect of care. For example a rheumatologist (my former area) or a hospitalist, whose special role I talked about in a [recent Straight Talk](#). Beyond relationships with these specialists, a patient comes in contact with physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and a host of other well-meaning and well-trained associates who assist in so many important ways.

Obviously, with the introduction of more sophisticated technology, including electronic medical records, the responsibility for all of us to remain "high touch" in an increasingly "high tech" world has become more challenging. Comforting with compassion and care remains our mandate, from the time a person first enters an office waiting room, like at our Naples Heart Institute, to the moment their illness subsides and they receive palliative care from people like **Gwen Kolegue** and her colleagues.

We each have a duty to ensure that our patients receive the most knowledgeable, attentive and empathetic care we can offer. In so doing, we will guarantee that those we care for truly stay "connected" to NCH.

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](mailto:allen.weiss@nchmd.org) to be added.