

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most

March 29, 2012

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We have spoken often about our region becoming a “*medical destination*” for people from outside our immediate area. Lately, this initiative has become more important and more focused. Indeed, the economic future of southwest Florida, our community’s healthcare, and the ongoing development of NCH are inextricably intertwined.

This theme has been explored recently by the Chamber of Commerce, led by Chamber Chairwoman Katie Sproul and President/CEO Mike Reagan, as well as by the NCH Board of Trustees’ Strategic Planning Committee, directed by **Mike Riley**, Chief Strategy Officer, and **Michael Feuer**, Chairman of the Board’s Strategic Planning and Marketing Committee. The *Naples Daily News* has written of late advocating for our region to become a medical tourist attraction, and the Collier County Tourist Development Council is also taking a leadership role by making a significant contribution to marketing in areas where we have a foothold with patients already coming to southwest Florida for care.

We are not being unrealistic when setting goals such as geographic expansion beyond our five-county area up the west coast of Florida, over the lower east coast of Florida, ascending to the original 13 colonies, and the northern reaches of I-75—particularly, Michigan and Minnesota. Today, one of every eight inpatients at NCH comes from one of these areas.

Attracting more out-of-market patients makes great sense for NCH and other local healthcare providers. Most local businesses have excess unused capacity two-thirds of the year, during the “off season.” Think of empty hotel rooms, unfilled restaurant seats, and all the unused support services with year-round costs (“fixed overhead” in accounting terms). Imagine how positive it would be for our entire local economic ecosystem as more tourists seek care “off season” and discover how pleasant—in terms of climate and tax structure, for example—southwest Florida really is.

As we all know, Collier County has already been recognized twice as the healthiest of 67 counties in Florida by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, with the longest life expectancy for a woman—86 years—and second longest for a man—80.2 years. (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/florida/collier> and <http://www.pophealthmetrics.com/collier>)

So the question remains: How do we best share this great news beyond our region? One way to jump-start the process is by collaborating or affiliating with another successful, prestigious organization. Adding to our motivation is the recognition that our region has lost about one-third of its property values in the recent downturn, which is a severe setback for the tax base and the community.

For its part, NCH has increased its local market share from 73 to 76%, based on the most recent available shared data. Our goal, however, is to increase not just our share of the local market, but also the overall size of the market. Certainly being named as one of 247 *U. S. News and World Report*’s best regional healthcare systems, and being in the top 10% of the Society for Thoracic Surgery’s rankings for cardiac surgery, help tremendously to build the NCH brand. We have strong unaided market awareness locally, but our brand still needs to be recognized outside our immediate area.

Our goal is to spread this recognition and quality quickly and widely to enhance our ability to care locally and nationally—eventually, even globally—and to help our region reach its goal of building a stable, healthy, year-round economy.

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.