

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



April 12, 2012

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Last week I had a first-ever experience of being on the “other” side, as an emergency room patient. There is a happy ending, and I felt so proud of and comforted by the NCH team. (I also felt a bit embarrassed.)

My afternoon started wonderfully with Executive Director Liz Allbritten’s inaugural program introducing high school students from Immokalee Foundation to volunteer community leaders. This took place at a reception in the spacious front lobby provided by the Hilton Naples. The almost 50 students introduced themselves, presented calling cards and talked about their professional aspirations as the citizen volunteers shared helpful questions and suggestions.

After about an hour I felt lightheaded and thought I would sit down and take a break. That’s when my day changed dramatically. I awoke on the floor and was told that I had passed out for 2-3 minutes. Initially some attendees were looking for me to assist with helping the “victim”— but Steve Weinman, Executive VP/COO of Healthcare Network of Southwest Florida and a good friend, correctly identified me as the patient.

EMS came promptly and competently assessed me as still unsteady. My first ride in an ambulance, driven by **Austin Bleiweiss** and accompanied by **Javier Rodriguez**, was uneventful. By that time I’d had an IV and was feeling better. I was dehydrated from exercising vigorously that morning (I swam 2,000 meters in the Wellness pool), then not rehydrating or eating enough during the day. I didn’t realize it at the time, but I was also coming down with a wicked viral gastroenteritis.

The first person I made eye contact with in the ER after arriving on a stretcher was our newly named Director of the ER and ICU **Jon Kling, RN**. I didn’t have long to wait before a great RN, **Peggie D’Alessandro**, quickly assessed me and transformed me in less than a minute from a hospital administrator to a patient. Our longest-serving ER physician, **Dr. Tony Krembs**, came by to start the workup and subsequently gave me great care until I was discharged.

In my former professional life as a practicing physician for 23 years, I had the honor of caring for many physicians and their families. It always seemed a little more complicated because you never wanted to have anything go wrong. That’s always a physician’s perspective, of course, but somehow things seem to happen when you are treating physicians. I suspect the saying, “*Physicians make the worst patients,*” may have some truth to it. I resolved to be a good patient.

After the start of my workup, ER Tech **MariRose Janson** followed with a normal EKG. I had a chest x-ray performed by X-ray Tech **Scott (Frank) Bauer** and assistant **Stephne DeWit**, registration graciously completed by **Pamela Williams**, and then more IV and oral fluid. Friends and colleagues came to visit, bringing my laptop (the wireless is good and free in the ER). Then a beeper message from the *Naples Daily News* asked how I was feeling. They had been informed of the incident at the Hilton. I told them the care was great, I felt well, and should be discharged soon.

Shortly thereafter I had a CT scan, which was also normal. When I started to shiver, CT Techs **Brooke Langdon** and **Luis Ferro** comforted me with a warm blanket. Finally, **Dr. Doug Paone**, an old friend and colleague, stopped by to confirm all that had happened. Unit Secretary **Amy Miller** removed my ID bracelet and I was released.

I dropped by for the end of a meeting in our Telford Building, got a ride from CFO **Vicki Orr** to pick up my car, and thought about our wonderful, competent team—even though I thought I’d be the last one to ever need them! My day’s events gave a whole new meaning to our theme, “*This Is My Hospital.*”

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allen".

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.