

May 3, 2012

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Healthcare has entered the "digital age," and none of us in this field will ever be the same. Digitalization of healthcare brings with it improved quality, better safety, superior patient satisfaction, clinical integration, population health management, provider alignment, and enhanced value for insurance company payers.

So important is our participation in this new digital healthcare environment that I will devote two issues of *Straight Talk* this month to this critical subject. This installment concerns electronic medical records and in the near future we'll discuss additional advantages. Recently retired Chief Information Officer **Susan Wolff** helped to position NCH among the top 200 hospital systems in the country and we are now being advised by **Helen Thompson**, a Fellow in the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives, as we continue with our robust partner, Cerner, the world's largest healthcare computer company.

Over the next year, NCH will facilitate an electronic Health Information Exchange (HIE) for southwest Florida. Having networks of electronic records communicating with each other will enable timely exchange of medical data among providers, and it will save lives and increase cost-effectiveness. When healthcare providers use electronic records to receive the right information on the right patient at the right location at the right moment, all of us—patients, physicians, employers and the community-at-large will reap the benefits. Here's how.

**Patients** receive more accurate service when clinical records are available at the point of care. Other benefits include:

- Improved privacy and security of personal health and medical information.
- Reduced likelihood of medical errors resulting from incomplete or inaccurate information.
- Improved doctor-patient communication and coordination of care among providers.
- Elimination of the need for hand-carried and faxed transmission of health records.
- Improved diagnosis and reduced orders for duplicate tests and procedures.

**Physicians** benefit from improved privacy and security of patient health information, and:

- Improved quality of care, timeliness, patient safety, outcomes, convenience, and workflow efficiency.
- Improved diagnosis and reduced orders for duplicate tests and procedures.
- Enhanced communication between hospitals, laboratories, pharmacies and referring providers.
- Improved access to test results and referral consultations.

**Employers** also benefit in many ways by using electronic medical records:

- Reduced healthcare costs through efficiencies and coordination of care.
- Reduced absenteeism from online consults and fewer duplicate tests.
- Increased access to high quality medical professionals.
- Improved communication during emergency situations.

**Community** benefits include coordination of care and collaboration, as well as:

- Reduced likelihood of records being unavailable or lost, and the facilitation of the transfer of records.
- Reduced healthcare costs through efficiencies and coordination of care.
- Community reporting and tracking of trends and health policy planning.

Electronic medical records present enormous benefits to us all. And that's just the beginning of the story.

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.