

January 3, 2013

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to 2013! What kind of year will it be? I anticipate another good one for NCH, for southwest Florida, and for healthcare. But we all have ample challenges, and here are three specific ones I look for in the coming year.

- **First, a return to professionalism in healthcare.**

Doing the right thing often enough gets the right result. The definition of a “professional” is one who puts the interests of the client ahead of his or her own. Ethical healthcare professionals do the right thing and are rewarded appropriately. Unfortunately, there are some in our profession who prey on vulnerable, unsophisticated patients through over-diagnosis, over-treatment, and excess hospitalizations. According to Christine Laine, MD, editor-in-chief of *Annals of Internal Medicine*, “5% of the nation's gross national product is spent on tests and procedures that do not improve patient outcomes.” (<http://annals.org/article.aspx?articleid=1033305>) In the new year, we, as professionals, need to police the abusers who give our profession a bad name. Appropriateness of care is as important as quality and safety.

- **Second, continue to grow the market, not just “market share.”**

Southwest Florida has undergone cyclical booms and busts every 5-10 years during the 35 years I have had the pleasure of being a member of the community. Our delivery of consistently excellent care and a quality experience to our patients and their families will grow southwest Florida as a medical destination. Already, in less than six months, our Mayo Clinic affiliation has attracted increasing numbers of patients from distant areas for diagnosis and care. Positive word-of-mouth recommendations have contributed to our continued growth. In a community where most sectors are underutilized for two-thirds of the year, the best way to lessen seasonal downtime is by expanding the market for existing institutions, professions, and industries. Growing as a medical destination will continue to be good for our entire community.

- **Third, a focus on outpatient preventive care and population health.**

In line with adding value, we will continue to transform ourselves from a repair shop to a patient care model, where our goals are prevention of illness, avoidance of expensive hospitalization, and improving the health of the population. Collier County was recognized as the healthiest of Florida’s 67 counties for two of the past three years, and the third healthiest for the most recent year. Today, we are focused on smoking cessation, increased exercise, weight control, well women’s health, drowning prevention for pre-school children, avoidance of teenage pregnancy, and a generally safe environment for all. In the new year, we’ll consider adding a calorie count to menu items in NCH cafeterias.

NCH is the largest non-governmental entity in Collier County. Our 21-member Board is committed to our 4,000 colleagues, 650-member physician staff and 1,200 volunteers while continuing to improve the quality of life we all appreciate. Our challenges—limited resources, increased global competition, etc.—remain formidable. But I have great confidence that the good and proud and professional people of NCH will once again rise to the challenges that confront us.

Happy New Year!

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.