

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most

May 30, 2013

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We have seen healthcare's future—and it is in Kansas City!

Last week, 10 of us from NCH were led on a wondrous tour of our Cerner partner's *Vision Center* at its Midwest headquarters. Our tour leader was NCH's Chief Information Officer **Helen Thompson**, and what we discovered about the future of healthcare delivery was definitely eye-opening.

The clear emphasis was on taking medical care out of the hospital and into physicians' offices and patients' homes. Our NCH Physician Group colleagues on the trip, **Dr. Karen Henrichsen D.O.**, Front End Revenue Cycle Manager/Trainer **Allison Zablo**, Applications Manager **Eileen Connolly-McDermott**, Revenue Cycle Director **Cheryl Shaffer**, and Chief Administrative Officer, NCH Physician Group **Zach Bostock**, were all impressed with the robust medical office information technology system, active in more than 55,000 offices across the nation and world.

The benefits of this system are myriad. For patients, appointments may be made and lab results obtained securely online, with one seamless, medical record whether in the hospital, at an outpatient facility such as physical therapy or diagnostic radiology, and one set of billing/insurance records. For caregivers, this system provides easy access to information. At the same time, the system enables collection of data about individual patients and populations, leading to improvements in patient health through suggested preventive measures and early trend-spotting in such areas as flu epidemics.

Even more interesting will be our ability to manage patients at home, especially those who would have been hospitalized in the past. This will be possible as wireless medical monitoring devices—such as blood pressure cuffs, oxygen saturation measurement machines, thermometers, scales, and even seeing and talking with patients through Skype or Face Time—become relatively inexpensive to install and integrate at home. Think how much more comfortable and secure an elderly patient with congestive heart failure or simple pneumonia will feel, monitored safely at home.

Future hospitalizations will be limited to major surgery and intensive care. Emergency rooms will send most patients home with wireless monitoring devices. At NCH, we're continuing with such innovation with our Cerner partner, as we embark on *Smart Emergency Rooms*, using the same technology we have in our *Smart Hospital Rooms*. Ultimately, a sick person's bedroom becomes a private *Smart Room* at home.

The rest of us on the Kansas City visit, Chief Nursing Officer **Michele Thoman**, Chief of Staff **Kevin Cooper**, new Chief Financial Officer **Mike Stephens**, and I were mightily impressed. I recalled a similar trip to Kansas City on my first day in my new NCH job 13 years ago. What I thought seemed like "science fiction" in the year 2000—bar code medication administration, wireless integrated vital sign machines, digital documentation by nurses and physicians, secure internet access to medical records, Smart Rooms, etc.—have become reality in southwest Florida.

Today NCH is recognized as a *Most Wired* system for 2012 and is among the top 250 healthcare systems in the country for information technology. Thirteen years from now, we'll look back and realize that 2013 was just another start in realizing the immense benefits of the new world of healthcare. Look forward to an amazing journey!

Respectfully,



Allen S. Weiss, M.D., President and CEO

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