

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



December 14, 2007

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This week we were visited by two groups of unscheduled – but expected – visitors.

Survey teams from both Medicare and the Joint Commission of Hospital Accreditation arrived, unannounced, on campus to assess NCH quality and compliance. According to Rodney Judd, Director of Patient Advocacy & Regulatory Compliance, we passed both examinations with flying colors.

Rodney reported that the surveyors praised our progress with special mention of improvements in discharge planning, the cleanliness of the hospital, and nursing documentation, to mention just a few standout areas. Not unexpectedly, surveyors also cited several areas in which they made recommendations for improvement. We will share these recommendations with the appropriate departments and will use our performance processes to bring about further improvements.

Our approach in these surveys is to work with surveyors in a collegial, cooperative and educational relationship. We know this ultimately helps the patients we serve. We also prepare diligently for these surveys. And I want to thank all of you for that preparation and hard work. The positive results demonstrate the great strides our team has made in enhancing patient safety and quality. This is a continuous process, and I commend you all on our steady improvement.

Elsewhere on our quality initiative, a number of us – twelve Board members, three medical staff members, CFO Vicki Hale, two NCH staff and I – spent two days this week at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's annual meeting. There, we joined more than 17,000 people from healthcare institutions around the world. Theme of the meeting was "*The Energy of Many*," which suggests how well we do when we learn from each other in pursuit of the common goal of saving lives.

One of the many best practice ideas shared at the meeting came from a hospital system that demonstrated a procedure to deliver a heart attack patient from its front door to the cath lab, stopping the heart attack in a miraculous 12 minutes. NCH was an early innovator in this technique seven years ago. We were pleased at the time when we could deliver similar results in less than 90 minutes. Our times have gotten better since then, but as the Institute meeting demonstrated, we've got more to learn and further improvement to make.

One reason for optimism that we'll be able to continually improve hospital quality is the commitment of our dedicated NCH Board of Trustees. The board sets high standards on quality and is totally supportive of our efforts to accomplish what may have once seemed impossible. Indeed, a few years ago, few would have predicted the recognition NCH has received and the success we have realized in terms of quality.

When we can accomplish this and have fun, too – like this past Saturday when Santa paid a visit to the Telford building and helped our Human Resources team entertain a few hundred children, parents, and grandparents (including my very young Grandson) – it's all doubly worth the effort.

Happy holidays, all. And many thanks.

Respectfully,

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

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