

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



May 22, 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We have just completed three Board meetings over three days – Finance and Quality committees and the full Board last night. The NCH Board is composed of 28 community members, including representatives who may be a physician, nurse, fellow employee or former executive. Having a diverse Board with the common interest of serving the community creates a positive atmosphere where ideas are exchanged, results shared, and policy directions set for subsequent implementation.

A wise former NCH Board member once said, *“Two things will put you out of business—finances and quality.”* That is why Finance and Quality are two of the Board’s most important committees.

- The Finance Committee reviewed our performance for the first seven months of the fiscal year, which began in October. Through that period, we recorded a loss for the two hospitals of \$331,000. Basically, while we’re busier than a year ago, we also have more patients who either don’t have insurance or have insurance which pays inadequately. More patients needing more medicines, implants or other devices also drives up supply costs. One important improvement approved by Finance was the renovation of 4 North, which will be completed over the summer. This floor has not been upgraded for about 20 years. Its renovation will mean a new nurses station and the creation of 12 rooms which can be private or semi-private, depending on need. Such positive changes to grow revenue and control costs give me confidence that we can handle the current downturn with a minimum of additional pain.
- The Quality Committee reviewed our quality parameters including mortality, morbidity (side effects and unforeseen events), falls, infections, adverse drug effects, CMS parameters, HCAHPS (Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems) and other performance measures. In terms of our plan to improve the way we care for patients, we’ve targeted a more aggressive rounding program, in which each patient will be seen hourly and assessed for pain, positioning, and other comfort measures to make the hospital experience safer and more comfortable.
- Finally, the full Board reviewed a number of critical subjects, including Computer Physician Order Entry (CPOE) implementation, North Naples site development, and the ER patient flow project. The latter consists of a team from ER, nursing and administration, who have collaborated to form an “Emergency Admit Unit” near both ERs, where patients can be evaluated by admitting nurses and physicians prior to going to their rooms. This will give these patients a quiet place to start their hospital stay, while providing the receiving bedside nurses with a fully-evaluated patient. The units are pilots, open from 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. weekdays. The project goals are to improve patient flow in the ER, expedite patient evaluations and save valuable time for receiving nurses.

The summer months at NCH are traditionally regarded as the slower “off season.” However, some areas remain busy and I was gratified while rounding at North Naples this morning to see Casey, a Baker Tower 3rd floor unit secretary, volunteer to help out her colleague on the 4th floor who was transiently very busy with discharges and admissions. This sort of initiative ultimately helps our hospital improve its financial strength and enhance the quality of service we deliver to our patients.

Respectfully,

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

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