

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



October 2, 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

"Nothing happens when you stay home," is what my parents reminded my brothers and me when we were growing up. In turn, my wife and I gave the same advice to our two daughters.

That's why I'm a great believer in going where the action is at NCH—on the floors of both campuses where we care for our patients. Whenever I have the time, I enjoy getting up on the floors and seeing our wonderful employees in action. Some management experts call this "MBWA" for "Management By Walking Around." But I just call it "fun!" Here's an example of what I mean.

In making rounds last Friday afternoon after a productive luncheon discussion with the North Naples OR, PACU and pre-op staffs, I was pleasantly surprised to see two of our most energetic North Naples ICU nurses, Suzanne Wittman and Eileen Haely, visiting the Pediatrics Unit to huddle with one of our real stars, nurse Kara Prestigiacomio. I asked Suzanne and Eileen if they were "lost." They laughed and together with their preceptors Stephanie Devito and Cristin Garcia, and Jayme Roberts, our Clinical Coordinator for pediatrics, explained their newest plan to cross train ICU nurse volunteers to help with Pediatrics ICU care.

Our pediatric unit—dubbed a "*Seacarium*" because of the underwater décor—has experienced a 48% increase in admissions year-over-year. This is an impressive accomplishment, directly related to the confidence and competence of the pediatric caregivers, lead by Jayme and Dr. Deborah Lopez. And now, with the cross-training of experienced ICU nurses when needed, our Pediatrics Unit is even more well-equipped. Such cross-functionality enhances job security, intellectual and professional stimulation, and greater capacity for Pediatrics. It also adds materially to the overall reputation of NCH.

In general terms, what makes for a highly functional and competent nursing unit? Dr. Jack Zimmerman of George Washington University Medical Center has studied the subject and found the following:

- A strong team-oriented culture in which nurses and physicians set high standards and support each other in attaining them.
- Effective nurse and physician leadership, emphasizing high standards and staff empowerment with input and influence in budgetary and patient care decisions—what is called, "shared governance."
- Coordinated mechanisms involving written rules and policies, plans and schedules, and plenty of open, accurate, timely, and one-on-one communications with meetings both within and outside the unit.
- Collaborative problem-solving with frequent interaction and consultation between nurses and physicians, in which differences and concerns are openly discussed.

We're doing much of this here at NCH, but we still have a way to go. Under the joint leadership of CNO Linda Gipson and CMO Dr. Aurora Estevez, I am confident we will continue to improve. The Intensive Care Units, under the direction of Jonathan Kling, and 6 South under the direction of Sue Graziano, have begun projects to implement shared governance and collaborative problem-solving.

These units will soon be "change agents," just like Pediatrics and North Naples ICU are today. I can't wait to walk around and observe their progress, first hand.

Respectfully,

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

Allen S. Weiss, M.D.