

October 9, 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

*“History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats.”* So said Bertie C. Forbes, the creator of *Forbes* magazine.

This quote seems appropriate for the disturbing economic climate we all find ourselves confronting in our personal lives and here at NCH. We are being challenged as never before as individuals, a nation, a state, a local economy and a hospital system. It’s hard to imagine that global phenomena such as foreign oil interests and irresponsible Wall Street credit and lending standards would have such a direct effect on our Naples-based healthcare system. But they certainly do.

As a consequence, all of us at NCH are wondering, *“What will the season be like in Naples this coming winter?”* What is certain is that our role won’t change. We are here to care for our community as a whole and each person individually, as well as provide for ourselves and our families. Our challenge is to provide quality care while being fiscally responsible.

Primary in meeting this challenge is to budget wisely; that is, predicting how busy we are likely to be over the next 12 months. Through the budget process, we respond to anticipated demand with appropriate staffing. Having the right number of caregivers in the right positions addresses the concerns of both our patients, in helping ensure high quality and efficient care, and ourselves, in securing income and earning a sense of satisfaction in the knowledge that our work makes a difference.

Jerry Markham supported by many operations people leads the NCH budget team. This year’s budget assumes we will be as busy this coming year as we were last year. Realizing this projection makes it incumbent on all of us to *impress* the patients we have – so if they are ever sick in the future, they will think first of NCH. A hospital patient, 65 or older, has a 50% chance of being hospitalized again in the coming year. Obviously, we don’t wish anyone to be sick. But we do want those we treat to have a “wow” experience.

We can improve quality and save money at the same time. For example, Jodi Swarthout led a recent initiative to place twin laboratory processing machines in both hospital labs. Each machine can run over 250 specimens per hour and perform over 85 tests on a single tube of blood. Louise Hilliker, David Mason, Jim McGuire, and Rickie Zarb who oversee the automated process, report that in about 90% of all cases, lab turnaround time—measured from the door of the lab to results on PowerChart—has been reduced to less than 30 minutes. That’s remarkable. Consequently, we plan to save significant dollars by conducting the overwhelming majority of hospital lab tests in our own labs including the newly added capability to do Hepatitis, HIV and 35 additional tests. Additionally, we just started doing our own annual physical exam labs, pre-employment tests and Marco Island diagnostics in house. The point is, as the old saying goes, *“Why pay retail when you can save by doing it yourself?”*

I have no doubt that in time, we will weather the current economic storm. And I have great confidence that because we are blessed with such extraordinary technical and human resources at NCH, as long as we continue to work together, our healthcare system will not only survive, but thrive, even in the face of adversity.

Respectfully,



Allen S. Weiss, M.D.