

December 18, 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Should we be providing "healthcare" in our hospitals or "health" in our community?

That was the provocative question raised last week during two different national meetings, one held here in Naples (Estes Park Institute) and the other in Nashville (IHI-Institute of Healthcare Improvement) that were attended by several Board members, senior leadership and medical staff members.

Our answer can be found in the action taken last year when the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board changed our mission statement from "restore, promote and maintain" health to "promote, maintain, and restore." In other words, we placed the emphasis at NCH squarely on promoting and maintaining good health and preventing problems. This is so much better and more cost effective than restoring health, and it is clearly where successful healthcare organizations must focus in the future.

What makes for good health? According to Estes Park's president Dr. John Kitzhaber, former two-term governor of Oregon, only 10% of health is related to healthcare, the work of hospitals like ours. NCH, of course, has been well recognized for its performance in this area. The next 30% is related to the genetics you inherit from your parents I have commented on the role of genetics in this month's *Naples Journal* article, "Personalized Health Care—A Gift from Science," which can be found at <a href="https://www.nchmd.org/default.aspx?id=519&rid=76">www.nchmd.org/default.aspx?id=519&rid=76</a>.

Finally, there is the remaining 60%, which is related to what we do to ourselves—namely our lifestyle choices and environment. Sadly, although our nation boasts beautiful and busy Wellness Centers like ours, we remain the most overweight nation in the history of civilization. Staying "healthy" largely comes down to individual choice.

In the meantime, hospitals need to improve, particularly in making themselves "safer." Hospital mortality is among the top five leading causes of death in the U.S. One IHI speaker cited the chilling statistic that you have a greater chance of dying unnecessarily in a hospital than a soldier does of dying in Iraq. Unbelievable. Another IHI speaker described a preand post-operative checklist, which takes 90 seconds to complete by an experienced team and lowers complications 75%.

While improving safety and service remains a constant challenge at NCH, we should be proud of the recognition we continue to receive. Last night, I was gratified to receive the Women's Bar Association's 2008 Distinguished Executives Award for "leading in the workplace with vision, determination and compassion. The purpose of this award is to promote productive working environments for women." Clearly, this award recognizes all of us, together, rather than me, individually. The reason we have been so successful at NCH is that we encourage everyone's talents and abilities to shine through regardless of gender, race, origin or any other characteristic. It is my privilege to be a part of this NCH team.

Finally, after celebrating this week with 300+ children and relatives with Santa, along with three separate volunteer appreciation lunches in addition to having a holiday meals at both campuses for all three shifts yesterday, I know at least one individual who definitely needs to keep using to our own Wellness Center! Happy holidays to all.

Respectfully,

Allen S. Weiss, M.D.

P. S. Feel free to share *Straight Talk* and ask anyone to email me at allen.weiss@nchmd.org to be added.