

# Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most

January 15, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

**“Be prepared”** is the famous motto of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. And that’s good advice for all of us as we prepare to welcome several special guests in 2009.

We expect the Joint Commission, formerly known as the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), to soon make its unannounced, triennial, one-week visit to NCH with at least five examiners. So, we need to be *“JCAHO compliant”* with everyone understanding and practicing safe and effective care to reinforce our focus on quality and safety. JCAHO ([www.jointcommission.org](http://www.jointcommission.org)) describes its mission as dealing with an organization’s quality, safety-of-care issues, and the safety of the environment in which care is provided.

In addition to physically inspecting all clinical buildings, Joint Commission examiners will follow multiple patients through the course of their hospital stays. For instance, in terms of patients admitted through the ER (about 60% of our patients), examiners will ask ER staff such questions as where to find equipment or how to determine if a physician has privileges or what is the meaning for care-givers of *“SBAR”* (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation).

JCAHO typically employs the *“tracer method”* as outlined above by then following patients to the floor, investigating additional information, such as *“read back,”* which is the practice of reciting back telephone orders from the receiving nurse to the ordering physician to make sure everything was understood correctly. Also typically examined is medication reconciliation. This process traces the correct list of medications a patient is on when coming to the hospital (not as easy as it sounds, since most patients didn’t plan to be in the ER that day when they woke up) to the medications administered in the hospital to the final medications to be taken once at home.

The next JCAHO stop could be the OR, where the *“Universal Protocols”* process will be observed. And then other areas that contribute to patient care—from environmental services, dietary, and transportation, to the discharge process—will be observed and noted.

We’ve regularly passed these surprise JCAHO comprehensive reviews with a few areas needing further attention. But to do so requires our attention, time, and energy and, most of all, everyone working together. Again, we don’t know when JCAHO will be here. So be prepared.

Teamwork, of course, is one of our great strengths at NCH. This past week, we saw abundant examples:

- The new mom, suffering serious complications, flawlessly treated in the North Naples ER and the OR and then reunited with her relieved husband, healthy newborn by her side. ER, OR, Pediatrics and everyone in-between made this happen flawlessly. (Dad had returned home to find wife and newborn missing.)
- The entire ER staff chipping in to present a grateful ER Unit Secretary whose husband recently lost his job with practical gifts for her new baby expected this winter.
- The therapy staff of the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center for helping a colleague both personally and financially to ease the burden during a time of a family medical emergency.

These examples are not exceptions. They happen all the time, showing we are all in this together as we care for each other and the communities we serve.

Respectfully,



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

P. S. Feel free to share *Straight Talk* and ask anyone to email me at [allen.weiss@nchmd.org](mailto:allen.weiss@nchmd.org) to be added.