

February 19, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

There are amazing things going on every day at NCH that we sometimes take for granted. In the spirit of Valentine's Day, let me share four examples of our amazing work that I came across this past week.

- A woman in her 70s was taken to the ER, after she developed uncomfortable chest symptoms while walking on the beach. She was appropriately evaluated and quickly sent to the cath lab. But while her monitor leads were being converted by the Code Save-A-Heart team, she suffered her first of three episodes of ventricular fibrillation (a heart stoppage). As Chris Wood RN described it to me the patient's eyes rolled back in her head, vital signs crashed, and then she was "shocked" to bring her heart back. The woman was unaware of the heroic efforts to save her and even apologized for "falling asleep." She proceeded to suffer two similar episodes, until her coronary artery was able to be opened. The patient went home a few days later, having returned from near-death to a normal life, thanks to the dedication and expertise of Tracey Simpson, RN, RCIS, Kristi Villarraga RCIS, Alex Arduengo RCIS, Joe Permenter RCIS, and their colleagues.
- On the day after Valentine's Day, while I was rounding in the ICU, my eye caught a large box of chocolates with a note reading, *"Thank you so much for taking such good care of Mom (Room 3) a while back. Your great work and compassion enabled Mom to come home."* I never learned the clinical details about how the ICU team returned "Mom" to good health, but it sure sounded like a "save."
- During those same rounds, weekend ICU Clinical Coordinator Joyce Tuxhorn, RN pointed out another patient, who suffered cardiac arrest as an outpatient, was resuscitated, and then quickly placed on the hypothermia protocol to cool her brain and body to the low 90s for 24 hours. When I stopped by, the patient was recovering uneventfully, with all of her mental functions intact, waiting to be transferred to a medical floor. Without the new hypothermia protocol—and the quick and knowledgeable efforts of the team—who knows what might have happened to this patient's brain function.
- Finally, I ran into RN Sagi Paz, a new ICU nurse, who shared his inspirational story with me. Sagi was a 3N telemetry nurse for four years when he applied for the ICU/ER summer nurse-training program. He and nine colleagues completed the 16-week intensive training and joined the ICU team. Sagi's next goal is to become a CVRU (cardiovascular recovery unit) nurse. Sagi told me he had just successfully resuscitated his SICU (Surgical Intensive Care Unit) patient from a respiratory arrest, while working with the engineers to contain a minor floor flood from a faulty drain; all of this at the same time the patient was being dialyzed!

We have a great team here at NCH. And occasionally, we ought to stop and give ourselves credit for the heroic work we do. We are all in this together. And as a team, day-in and day-out, the work we do can only be described as, well ... *amazing!*

Respectfully,



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

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