

December 23, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

We've never had a "guest columnist" in *Straight Talk*. But this holiday season, when we consider all the joys we are fortunate to possess, I can't resist turning the column over to **RN Eric Macino**, night downtown Emergency Department (ED) Clinical Coordinator, who recently emailed me the following. Eric's words are modified only to respect the privacy of the patient and his family, and to explain some of the medical terms.

*On the 7th of November, a 7-year-old child and his mother presented to our ED triage, with the boy complaining of a headache. He did not have a history of trauma, and he was with his family all day. The triage nurse on duty was **Stacie Germain**. The ED was very busy; 26 beds were full including a few hall beds. Stacie approached one of the ED docs and asked for a few orders and a head CT for the child. She asked me to arrange for a bed and said she was worried about him. The boy was placed in a trauma room with a GCS of 15 [Glasgow Coma Score is a measure of brain function; 15 is normal and 8 indicates severe brain injury]. Approximately 10 minutes later, the boy's GCS was 8, and his scan revealed a large subarachnoid bleed [bleeding on the brain]. He had several nurses and two ED docs at his bedside. He was intubated and placed on a vent [a breathing machine, used when a patient is in danger of stopping breathing]. His ED attending was **Dr. Yong Lee**, with **Dr. Steve Turbiner** as backup.*

*Dr. Lee called **Dr. Deborah Lopez** [Pediatric Intensivist/Hospitalist at North Naples], who sped downtown to assist at bedside. The boy's heart rate plummeted into the 50s, large doses of Mannitol [a medicine to decrease pressure on the brain] were given, and he was manually hyperventilated to decrease his ICP [intracerebral pressure, which measures compression on the brain]. Several phone calls were made to find an accepting pediatric neurosurgeon and PICU [pediatric intensive care unit]. Approximately two hours after he arrived at NCH, the boy was airlifted to Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital in Hollywood. The nurses there told me that we did an "excellent job" of stabilizing and transferring.*

*Over the next couple of weeks, I made several calls to check on the child and followed his progress within HIPAA guidelines [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which protects medical privacy]. The day after Thanksgiving I was called to our waiting room at the request of a visitor. Standing there with his mother and brother was a bright-eyed, smiling young man. Most of the staff on duty happened to be the same staff that was on that night. With his family at his side, the boy proudly walked around and thanked our staff for saving his life. He had no deficits. He had an energy and bounce in his step. He was laughing and telling jokes. His mother said that this was "the best Christmas gift, ever."*

*I realize that this is our job and this is why we are here, and I know that this story is not unique. But along with his smiles, the boy's presence brought several tears to the eyes of staff members. This made all of us think of our own families and all of the tender mercies that life provides.*

Eric Macino's email ends with *Best wishes and Happy Holidays*. His story is a holiday present to us all.

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](mailto:allen.weiss@nchmd.org) to be added.