

December 31, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

New Year's Eve is the traditional time for looking back on the accomplishments of the year just ending, before we look ahead to the year to come. For this final *Straight Talk* of 2009, and after reviewing the past 51 issues, I've selected the following **Top 10 List of NCH Accomplishments** for which all of us should be proud. Here are the themes and landmarks that "popped out" on my review.

- 1. Quality.** Overwhelmingly, this is the single most important and distinguishing characteristic of NCH. In the year 2000, NCH had earned no distinctions for quality. This year, among our accomplishments, NCH shared eight best practices at the annual Institute of Healthcare Improvement, won another juried award for quality and safety from the Florida Hospital Association, and ranked in the top 5% for overall clinical quality for the sixth year in a row as determined objectively by HealthGrades.com (conferring a 52% lower chance of dying compared to the national average). Most important, we saved countless lives.
- 2. Patient safety.** From hand-washing compliance to timeouts before any procedure, safety will always be essential at NCH. An award-winning patient fall prevention program, our perennial low prevalence of pressure sores, and medication administration using bar code identification are just a few examples.
- 3. Joint Commission validation.** In July, the Joint Commission's surprise five-day visit validated all our hard work. Upon exiting, the team leader said ours was the best system he had surveyed so far this year. And the surveyor who had been doing this since 1992 said ours was among the finest systems she has seen over her career.
- 4. Healthy colleagues.** The health of our colleagues is also mission critical. We were committed in 2009 to setting an example in smoking cessation, medical screening for early diagnosis and prevention, cholesterol and glucose control, and increased physical activity. Our new insurance plans introduced incentives to help achieve these goals and set the example for our community.
- 5. Information technology.** Our intensified collaboration with the Cerner Corporation in 2009 was predicted by Cerner's co-founder as a "big win for the community and everyone else." We have already made progress with much more to come.
- 6. Fun.** There was the *Fun Splash* in the spring at the Livingston Water Park, scrumptious holiday meals for all colleagues, lunch with Santa and so many more examples of coming together to celebrate our role in the community.
- 7. Growth.** NCH experienced a 1.9% growth in total admissions year-over-year, with many bright spots. For one, our total joint replacement volume for Medicare patients is now second in the nation only to the famed Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City.
- 8. Finances & Economics.** Even in a time of healthcare challenges and hardship for many, we remained an economic beacon for the community. In November, our financial strength permitted a 1.5% Board discretionary bonus—\$2.1 million in all—for everyone in good standing.
- 9. Emergency preparedness.** We remain well prepared for—and confident in the face of—emergencies such as the H1N1 flu, which fortunately thus far has not been a major threat.
- 10. Communication.** This, too, is an important management mandate, of which these weekly *Straight Talks* are a part. Last week, you read about a 7-year-old boy whose life was saved by an alert and competent ER. Accountant Betty Adams emailed: "*Your message brought tears to my eyes and a lump in my throat. I work for an awesome organization with truly gifted people. We are all truly blessed.*"

Thanks Betty, and thanks to all you "gifted people," who make NCH the "awesome organization" it has become. I couldn't be prouder to be associated with all of you. Best wishes for a healthy and happy New Year.

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.