

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



March 4, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Here is *really big news!* This week we announced another giant step in cardiology services, as nine cardiologists from four interventional cardiology groups joined the NCH Healthcare System to help transform our first-in-the-state cardiology program (www.HealthGrades.com) into a national “*Center of Excellence.*”

Drs. David Axline, Michael Flynn, Adam Frank, George Gamouras, Ronald Levine, Tracey Roth, Carlo Santos-Ocampo, Herman Spilker, and James Venable have integrated with NCH. We are delighted!

When fully ramped up, our new integrated cardiology team will be physician-led with performance based on quality, safety, coordination of care, growth, and control of cost, primarily through increased efficiency and reduction of waste. We will have a shared culture, shared risk, useful data, continuous learning and, most important of all, better outcomes for our cardiovascular patients as we develop the NCH Heart and Vascular Institute.

Once fully implemented a patient will call one phone number, ask for a consultation, and be directed to the cardiologist whose interests and abilities most closely match that patient’s needs. (Of course, if a patient already has a relationship with a particular cardiologist, the patient will continue with his/her cardiologist.) Before the meeting, records will be obtained, to optimize the visit.

A common Electronic Medical Record, shared with all the cardiologists, will ensure maximum knowledge and seamless communication with easy access for appropriate caregivers. If a patient then needs additional diagnostic testing, such as a cardiac catheterization or ECHO cardiology, this can be scheduled at the time of the appointment and performed quickly and easily in one location—the spectacular third floor of the Briggs Wellness Center, which will be built out over the next 18 months.

Here is **Dr. Levine’s** excellent summary of the beneficial impact of this new integration: “This partnership will allow us to deliver more efficient and safer care for our patients and our community by working together rather than separately.”

And this is only the beginning. Physicians can improve and grow the system by enhancing communication and coordination of care across boundaries of practice sites and facilities. Over time, other physicians will join this integrated cardiology practice, adding to our abilities and capacity to care for patients locally and from outside southwest Florida. Our goal in cardiology—in addition to improving the quality we offer local patients—is to rival our position as a “*National Center of Excellence*” in total joint replacements, where NCH is the second busiest total joint replacement hospital in the United States, with 7% of patients coming from outside our area.

So while this cardiac integration will help drive our regional economy, it will also add to our reputation for national healthcare quality. By integrating with our physicians for major healthcare needs, we will change the face of healthcare in our community. As I said, this is *really big news!*

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allen".

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.