

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most

April 29, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

It's important for all of us in healthcare, to take a step back from time-to-time and assess where we are and where we're going. One way to achieve this is to "*retreat*" from the daily grind and take inventory at an offsite meeting.

That's precisely what new Chairman of Pediatrics **Dr. Todd Vedder** did as he embarked on his three-year term. He along with **Pat Read**, Administrative Director, organized a retreat so that NCH pediatricians could listen to each other's ideas of how best to serve the children in our community.

Specifically, the department was invited to attend a four-hour session, led by **Dr. Gerald Lavandosky**, who in addition to being one of the covering intensivist/hospitalist pediatricians for **Dr. Debbie Lopez**, has facilitated many similar brainstorming sessions. **Dr. Aurora Estevez, Kevin Cooper, Phil Dutcher** and I attended as did Board members **Dr. Alberto De La Rivaherrera, Kay Gow, Mariann MacDonald** and **Ned Stedem**, who contributed to SWOT analysis and discussion. "SWOT analysis" is a business tool which identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Dr. Vedder set the tone for the retreat with his vision for pediatrics: "*To have a physically close medical home that meets the majority of our children's health care needs and exceeds their parent's/caregiver's quality expectations.*"

After we all split into groups to exchange ideas and recommendations, retreat leaders synthesized our thinking going forward to focus on two areas of major opportunity: First, the pediatric emergency room; and second, marketing, to share with the broader community our capabilities to care for sick children.

Pediatrics is a great NCH strength. We have nearly 30 independent pediatricians, along with several specialists. Our spectacular 24-bed Robert and Mariann MacDonald Seacarium capabilities have increased remarkably since Dr. Lopez and her teammates joined NCH. Importantly, pediatric transfers from the North Naples ER have dropped from almost 300 in 2006 to 104 in 2009. We have also increased our capacity to do outpatient procedures at North Naples with the goal of keeping children close to home.

Beyond raw numbers, retreat attendees heard from two local moms, who testified how a "grown up" NCH pediatric service made a difference in their families' lives. One mother explained how much better it was that her daughters, who suffer a metabolic disease, could be treated locally, rather than having to be transported in a helicopter to a children's hospital. The other mom echoed a similar sentiment about her identical twin boys, one of whom needed surgery.

NCH pediatrics care also means children's education and disease prevention. We partner with the Children's Museum of Naples (www.cmon.org) to provide health care education with a broad array of programs aimed at nutrition, wellness, mental health, dental health and other age-appropriate topics. We also have offered free sports physicals since before 1977, the year I came to town. We continued that tradition over the past few Saturday mornings, when more than 106 volunteers—physicians, physician assistants, ARNPs, NCH school nurses, NCH physical therapists, Wolford School CRNA students, and other care givers—were organized by our seven athletic trainers to conduct free sports physicals for 2,068 children.

Just part of the service that NCH pediatrics provides in caring for our community's most precious asset—the 65,000 children of Collier County.

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.