

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most

May 20, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

One small health bar for *Hospital Week*, one giant leap for community wellness.

Last week, we celebrated Hospital Week by distributing healthy snacks to our 3,500 colleagues. The reception was gratifying. In past years, I must admit, we featured decadent sweets and high calorie junk food. But management has gotten the message, and our new emphasis on disease prevention and wellness is spreading.

In my own rounds passing out fresh fruit and health bars, I encountered associates such as Clinical Technician (CT) **Martha Cecilia** and Unit Secretary **Sandra Hack**, excited about the new healthy choices. CT **Rhonda Lozo** emailed me asking about healthier choices in our cafeterias. Rhonda has waged her own healthier campaign by complementing her diet with regular exercise at the Wellness Center. We also discussed the NCH Program, “*Eight Weeks to Wellness*,” as a route to positive personal change.

We’ve also made great progress on the smoking front. Last year, NCH had at least 150 folks who smoked. Since the January 1 adoption of our new wellness-oriented health plan, about 96 have stopped smoking. When you stop smoking, it translates to adding an average of four years to your life. That’s got to be great news for former smokers **Sarah Bell**, a new grandmother, and OR Nurse **Dawn Hutchison-Finucan**, a concerned mom. OR Director **Bill Diamond** is celebrating his one year anniversary of being smoke free. And then there’s OR RN **Mary Glaser**, who recently quit after smoking a pack a day for 50 years; the equivalent \$110,000 lifetime savings, at today’s cost of \$6 a pack. Congratulations to these individuals and our colleagues who have quit. We will continue to encourage others to stop smoking as we have tobacco free campuses and smoking cessation programs.

NCH is serious about promoting wellness. Eighty-nine percent of our employees have completed a health risk assessment, participated in age/gender health screens, biometrics, and met with a Health Coach to design an individualized “*Road to Wellness*” plan.

- The health risk assessment poses questions about behaviors and attitudes ranging from seat belt use to alcohol consumption to the hours of sleep a person gets. (Too little or too much sleep shortens your life span.) Answers to the questions, coupled with family history, provide a health assessment score up to 100 points. The questionnaire will be repeated yearly, looking for improvements.
- Age/gender screens include simple lab tests of cholesterol, triglycerides, blood sugar, mammograms, PSAs, colonoscopy, etc. We’ve had more than a few colleagues with occult-elevated PSAs and breast and colon lesions.
- Biometrics calculate body mass index and waist-to-hip ratios, good predictors for cardiac disease.

I have no doubt we’ve already saved lives by early detection of asymptomatic disease. Working together, NCH Health Coaches and individuals can ensure a healthier employee population. And it’s important, therefore, that NCH employees who haven’t yet taken advantage of this terrific program, consider doing so in the future.

Part of our job, after all, is improving our own wellness so that we can set the standard for a healthier community.

So keep eating those health bars!

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.