

May 27, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

If you've never thought of NCH as a great *symphony*, think again.

That's the message I came away with after attending the National Patient Safety Congress last week. The plenary session was a most unusual lesson in leadership and teamwork, conducted—literally!—by orchestra leader Roger Nierenberg.

Maestro Nierenberg creatively used music as a management metaphor and the Orlando orchestra as an example of a complex organization that depends on coordination of team members to deliver powerful results. The maestro interspersed sections of the orchestra throughout the audience so that musicians and attendees were all in close proximity and could carefully observe and meticulously listen. The conductor then demonstrated typical institutional behaviors, from the grating cacophony that emerges from miscommunication and individuals disregarding others ... to the full, rich sound that flows from a beautifully integrated orchestra.

The performance illustrated the disastrous consequences that can result from a leader who micromanages or doesn't communicate or is enamored with himself, and individuals who don't work together or compete with each other. While the instruments, music and players stayed the same, the range in the quality of sound produced between a smooth working team and one that didn't work together was extraordinary—ranging from horrible to magnificent.

The orchestra leader's message has great parallels at NCH.

The reason we are doing so well is that we are working together. We are a team of 3,400 colleagues, 630 physicians and 1,200 volunteers who communicate with and listen to each other. And all of us share a common goal. Just as the conductor and orchestra create music for listeners, we preserve and enhance health for the community. That's one reason why Collier County has been recognized by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin as being the healthiest county, with the longest life expectancy, in Florida.

At the same meeting, the Florida Hospital Association Quality and Patient Safety Advisory Committee released its plan to improve quality at all 400 Florida hospitals, by decreasing central line infections, readmission rates, and improving surgical outcomes. NCH has been a leader in all of these initiatives. We seek to share our best practices, learn from others and ensure that Florida continues to be a destination location. Less encouraging is that only 25 Florida hospitals have signed up for the program so far.

It's also disturbing that, according to the *Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care* and the *New England Journal of Medicine*, healthcare in Florida is costlier than the nation, without a measurable difference in quality. Florida costs Medicare \$9,378 per person per year, compared to the national average of \$8,303. While the cost in Naples is lower (\$8,125 per person per year), we still have plenty of room for further improvement.

Such continuous improvement—even with our more than 90 awards for quality—is what we seek at NCH. To help us continually improve, we have a clear vision, strong computer technology and the most compassionate caregivers in the state. Together, we will continue to make beautiful healthcare music for our community.

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.