

April 14, 2011

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Here is a periodic “Report from Washington,” where I spent part of this week at the American Hospital Association’s annual meeting. One of AHA President Rich Umbdenstock’s primary themes was “*taking charge of our future and building bridges with patients before they arrive and after they leave the hospital.*” Bravo to that. Here are a few highlights from our sessions.

- Dr. Don Berwick, Director of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, began his opening plenary address by declaring, “*We are in fascinating times in healthcare.*” He noted that we can do so much more for the sick and infirm than ever before, and we can care for many more people than ever before—but our system is unsustainable.

Berwick stressed the importance of working together to improve quality, lower costs and realize better health for the entire population. Physicians, nurses, mid-level providers, and ancillary healthcare workers ranging from environmental service to dietary can only accomplish this triple goal by collaboration and mutual respect.

As proof, Dr. Berwick, who was previously the CEO of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (which NCH has participated in for the past six years) and other speakers shared recent compelling data, including a 58% decrease nationally in blood infections caused by central intravenous lines in intensive care units, decreased utilization of emergency rooms and hospitals when chronically ill patients are managed in special out-patient clinics, avoidance of readmissions by video recording discharge instruction, and having these instructions viewable on YouTube for future reference.

- Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius was able to join the meeting, after the government averted a shutdown. She announced the *Partnership for Patients*, collaboration with hospitals and others to reduce hospital-acquired complications by 40% and readmissions by 20%.
- Yesterday, our Florida delegation met with Senators Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio and nine members of the House of Representatives. Sen. Nelson spent the most time with us and was extremely knowledgeable. Our legislators seemed to fully understand the sacrifices hospitals have made and the need to make ours a more efficient system. This would include selflessness, bottom-up approaches, regaining position/confidence as a world leader, and adding value (meaning quality divided by cost).

Summarizing our message, we encouraged our representatives to move forward in three areas: (1) Medicaid reform so that both patients and care givers could be treated fairly; (2) regulatory relief through removal of antiquated regulations which add cost without benefit; and (3) preserving the positive aspects of the *Affordable Care Act* while refining provisions which interfere with providing good care. As an industry and as individual hospitals, we also stressed that over the past several years, we have all been actively overcoming economic hardships. Our point was that while we all are willing to sacrifice, we don’t want to be alone or disproportionately disadvantaged. I believe our message got through.

Our greatest national health care concern at the moment is how to share our industry’s considerable accomplishments in serving patients, with more equitable distribution of the burden of decreased resources. Fairness for all is the bottom line.

Respectfully,



Allen S. Weiss, M.D., President and CEO

P.S. Feel free to share *Straight Talk* by emailing me at allen.weiss@nchmd.org to be added; and join us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nchflorida.