

August 18, 2011

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

One of three overarching goals at NCH is “ensuring the wellness of our local community.” (Our other two are “improving the patient experience” and “adding *value* to healthcare,” defined as quality divided by cost.) And at NCH, “ensuring community wellness” begins at home.

That’s why Chief Human Resource Officer **Brian Settle** and his team initiated a health and wellness partnership in August 2009, encouraging our over 3,700 colleagues with their 2,100 spouses and insured children to increase their exercise, avoid tobacco, and be screened for occult diseases, such as undiagnosed cancer, hypertension (high blood pressure), diabetes and hyperlipidemia (high cholesterol and triglycerides).

The aim of this program is to improve health and lower health insurance costs for participants. Prevention, health awareness, individual responsibility, accountability, and addressing chronic conditions are core principles. I’m delighted that *88% of our colleagues* are participating in this important program.

The initial screen includes measuring body mass index (BMI), the ratio of height and weight, and waist to hip ratio (please see <http://www.nchmd.org/default.aspx?id=519&link=navmenu&rid=96> for an explanation of the importance of these two ratios); plus basic blood tests such as a lipid screen (cholesterol and triglycerides); a health risk assessment, which is a short computer questionnaire about your current health status; age/gender screening such as mammograms, EKGs, colonoscopy starting at age 50, Prostate Specific Antigen; and being a non smoker. Individual results are reviewed confidentially with a health coach so that everyone understands his/her risks and opportunities to improve.

Results so far have revealed life critical information. We’ve discovered 48 people with colon polyps, which left undiscovered would probably evolve into colon cancer; 33 abnormal mammograms; 27 elevated prostate blood tests (PSAs); 184 elevated blood sugars, an early sign of diabetes that is best addressed with education about diet and exercise; and 183 elevated blood pressures, which since recognized are being controlled. We’ve also experienced a huge increase in the number of colleagues, spouses and children who are now more aggressively taking care of themselves. This attitude helps participants lead better and healthier lives—thus improving the wellness of our community.

In an effort to improve our environment, we will address our nation’s most noxious health hazard—smoking—by initiating a policy to not hire smokers, starting in October. (This policy already exists at Cleveland Clinic, Humana and other major companies, which have shown improved healthcare experiences.) At the same time, we will continue to encourage our colleagues who do smoke to take advantage of the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) tobacco cessation program to “*Quit Smoking Now*” and add an average of 10 years to their lives. NCH employees have access to this and other smoking cessation information on the internal NCH website smoking cessation employee resource page.

The best news from this effort is that as a result of improved NCH employee health, we anticipate that our health care costs will not increase significantly. So not only are we getting healthier physically, but financially as well.

As I have said so many times, we are all in this together. And together we have made a tangible change in our own and, by extension, our community’s wellness. NCH employees should serve as an example to our community of how best to maximize our own health. I’m delighted we are doing just that.

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.