

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



October 27, 2011

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Starting next Tuesday, a major new system-wide environmental and recycling effort gets underway here at NCH. And we'll officially be on our way to saying: "*This Is My **Green** Hospital.*"

Many of us already recycle at home. But imagine your home is a 681-bed (soon to be 715-bed) hospital system with more than 36,000 inpatients and 110,000 outpatients per year, 17 office locations and 3,750 colleagues. That's a huge recycling challenge! But we're up to the task—along with our new partner Stericycle to provide the education and follow-up in their *Waste2Green4Healthcare* program. Our first year goal: Recycling one million pounds of waste. That's a tough number to visualize, so consider the following:

- For every 2,000 pounds of paper recycled, 17 trees are saved.
- One aluminum can saves enough energy to run a TV or operate a computer for three hours.
- Every glass bottle recycled saves enough energy to light a 100-watt light bulb for four hours.

What changes will you see? Each nursing station, and all the medication rooms, pharmacies, kitchens, administration areas, staff lounges, medical offices and operating rooms will have either 23 or 44-gallon containers with green opaque bags to make collection easy. As it turns out, most of what we throw away is recyclable. All of the packaging materials for any medical device such as a syringe or dressing can be collected in the recycle container. Certain areas within the hospital—such as the operating room, pharmacy, and material management—have huge recycling potential.

Under this new program, our actual progress will be measured and shared on a proprietary web portal home screen, which has a quick snapshot of our system's waste along with a comparison to others in healthcare. We pride ourselves on being a learning organization, so we can benchmark and share best practices as we all learn from each other.

A hospital must follow many OSHA guidelines, so we still expect to have 6-15% of our waste designated as "regulated medical waste," which requires special handling for contaminated or potentially infectious materials.

This new green program is one more example of NCH doing the right thing. It comes on the heels of our huge success in bending the health care cost curve for our colleagues, which resulted in no increase in health care insurance costs for NCH as compared to the average 9% increase for the rest of the nation. Our construction and expansion projects are moving along nicely.

Promoting, maintaining and restoring health involves more than just individual and physical well-being. Our environment is precious, and our colleagues wanted to "go green" for some time. Now we are on our way.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allen".

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.