

# Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



December 1, 2011

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Congratulations, folks: You've done it again! For the second consecutive year, Collier County ranks first in Florida for Health Outcomes, according to the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute study of 3,200 U.S. counties, commissioned by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Stated simply, out of Florida's 67 counties, we're Number One! And no one should feel prouder than the caregivers at NCH. (Ironically, the *Naples Daily News* reported this news on page three the day after NCH hosted a health forum of more than 100 local leaders, organized by the Collier County Health Department, so effectively led by Dr. **Joan Colfer**.)

Our healthy environment and high-quality care in Collier County underscore my belief that the health of our population and the healthcare we offer here will be the economic engine to drive southwest Florida's well being in the years ahead. Our goal at NCH is to become a "*medical destination*" for the southern half of Florida, the southeast United States, and even the Caribbean Sea basin, Central and South America. This is no pipe dream, as one of eight patients at NCH, who spend a night or more in the hospital, now hail from outside our five-county area. And this is achieved purely through "word of mouth," not targeted advertising.

As to the Wisconsin health outcomes survey, its data are the most recent available, with 50% of the objective comparison based on mortality and 50% based on morbidity information gathered from 2001-2007 for low birth weight and from 2003-2009 for measures of "poor or fair health, poor physical health, and poor mental health." The information on tobacco use, adult obesity, excessive drinking, motor vehicle crash death rate, sexually transmitted infections, and teen birth rate was obtained by evaluating data from 2001-2009. Among measures used by the researchers were "*access to care*" quantified by numbers of uninsured adults and primary care providers and also "*quality of care*" measured by preventable hospital days, diabetic screening, and mammography screening. Additionally included in this study were socioeconomic factors such as educational levels, unemployment, poverty stricken children, social support, single-parent families and violent crime, plus other objective measures such as air quality, access to healthy foods, and recreational factors.

Collier County's continued strong showing is attributable to several things. One is our exemplary average infant birth weight, due largely to our 12-year-old *Women's Health Foundation*, which focuses on prenatal care for previously-uninsured women and helps them obtain Medicaid insurance. Program Administrator **Tom Van Pelt** and his colleagues do a great job. Another positive factor is our county's low death rate from heart attacks, largely due to our *Code Save a Heart* which, for the past two years, has taken every single heart attack victim from the front door of the downtown NCH campus to the Cardiac Cath Lab in under 90 minutes to stop the heart attack.

The most important factor in Collier County's excellent health standing lies in the ability of local healthcare professionals to execute. In recent years, we have changed the way we care for our community. In this context, we are installing a 211 access line for people who need non-urgent but critical help. This 211 line exists in most every other county in Florida but ours. Thanks to the Community Foundation, 211 will be available in Collier shortly.

As residents and healthcare practitioners, we have much to be proud of in Collier County. We also share a heavy responsibility. Our county can no longer depend on traditional industries such as tourism, construction and agriculture to lift our economy to the next level. Rather, what we need to focus on is the high growth potential of healthcare. For our community to sustain its excellence, the people of NCH must respond to this challenge and lead the 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* and ask anyone to email me at [allen.weiss@nchmd.org](mailto:allen.weiss@nchmd.org) to be added.