

January 26, 2012

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

There is nothing more important to hospitals in general—and NCH in particular—than the quality of the healthcare we deliver.

To help us ensure that our services are of the highest quality, NCH is constantly and comprehensively reviewed and assessed by a substantial group of outside auditors and reviewers. We have just completed a series of such thorough, head-to-toe reviews by state and national examiners, who assessed our campuses across the county. Final results of those reviews are pending formal conclusion from the officials in Tallahassee. But based on what we've derived from the statements of our examiners, we are cautiously optimistic about the results. And we have benefited enormously, in terms of education, from the process. Such knowledge will yield a direct benefit for all of us and for the improvement of our community's health.

Among the many organizations that review us frequently are the Agency for Healthcare Administration, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, the Joint Commission, Department of Health, Society for Thoracic Surgery, College of American Pathologists, Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, bond rating agencies, our auditing firm PricewaterhouseCoopers, regional fire departments, and others.

All of these outside assessors add value to this critical industry. They provide “fresh eyes,” if you will, to what we do every day and perhaps in some cases take for granted. In our daily rounds, it may occasionally be easy to overlook a habit or behavior or process. Having competent, experienced, capable auditors, who often bring decades of experience, to validate our processes or help us improve is an important ingredient in providing successful outcomes for our patients. Our prevailing attitude is to fully engage those who come to help us. We are welcoming and transparent, and compliant and open to suggestion. We all should understand that no one is perfect, particularly in the complex world of healthcare.

An added—and unpredictable—component to these reviews is the presence of the media, with its 24/7/365-news cycle and its incessant hunger for new, preferably controversial material. In dealing with a topic as specialized and important as healthcare, it is critical to carefully understand the full story, in an accurate, timely and non-judgmental manner. In this sense, all of us—media and healthcare providers, alike—have it within our power to comfort or confuse, assuage or aggravate, and generally have a beneficial or harmful effect on a patient or a community. For our part, we try to assist the media when we can in explaining audit results, while always mindful of maintaining appropriate confidentiality. Despite our efforts, occasionally editorial comments and uninformed conclusions are presented as “objective reporting.”

The challenge for healthcare professionals is to learn, improve and share best practices, all while we continue to care for patients. This “learning on the fly” is equivalent to changing a wheel on a moving car or, more accurately, a moving locomotive! This is the challenge that all of us at NCH must face every day, if we are to continue to improve the quality of the healthcare we deliver. Our responsibility—to ourselves and our community—is to continue to provide the best service we can, even as we profit from the assessments and recommendations of the many outside agencies who assist us in performing our urgent duties.

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](mailto:allen.weiss@nchmd.org) to be added.