

April 26, 2012

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It's *National Lab Week* at NCH. And as we celebrate, we can all agree with **Gerry Mendola**, North Naples Blood Bank Lead Technologist, that, "We have everything to do our job, especially great people."

The backbone of our hospital system and healthcare in general is laboratory medicine. So in honor of National Lab Week, I had the pleasure of touring the Karl and Helga Brand Laboratory at the North Naples Hospital. Laboratory Director Nancy Schafer led the tour, with Laboratory Supervisor Cheryl Sacks and Phlebotomy and Processing Supervisor Kim Ingle, whom I've known for 25 years, ever since I was in private practice and used the lab services extensively.

We followed a sample through the lab, starting with in-processing—the clearinghouse which typically collects more than 200 labs and has results available every day by 7 a.m. for up to 325 in-patients. **Narline Fontilme**, **Lulianne Joseph**, and **Helene Fleurival** supervise this meticulous process, utilizing bar codes, collection times, and specific tests ordered and organized for prompt and precise results. Getting the right patient the right test at the right time is mission critical. 90% of the time, results are available within 30 minutes of the specimen entering the lab by tube system or courier. Large flat-screen monitors notify technologists when a specimen is approaching the 30-minute mark, so extra effort can be directed towards accelerating analysis.

Some specific tests—sedimentation rates, HIV screens, MRSA determination, urine analysis and abnormal platelet counts—need to be performed manually. **Angel Kupiec**, NCH Laboratory Technologist of the Year two years ago and working with the Healthcare System for 15 years, is on the case in these special instances.

Both hospital labs are supervised by Administrative Director **Jodi Cooper**, and are supported by histology labs which receive samples of body tissue and fluids to be tested for the operating rooms, endoscopy, and outpatient surgery. **Ron Hobbs**, Pathology Assistant, handles these specimens, performing a complete examination and precisely cutting sections for the pathologists to make their final diagnoses. Downtown Histology Supervisor **Robin Swanson**, Laboratory Assistant **Michelle Gooley**, and their team handle an average of 175 to 200 blocks of tissue and frozen specimens per day from the operating room. Surgeons receive lab results in 20 minutes or less, which can potentially help determine the course of treatment for the patient.

Advanced technology, such as immunofluorescence, has progressed remarkably since I was a medical student. This is particularly true in our in-house microbiology division led by **Robin Williams**, and her team of **Ana Alvarez**, **Deb Ault**, **Cindy Powell**, and **Joe Kyle**, who have been working together for decades. We've improved culture turnaround times, particularly our pediatric cultures, as the lab is "in house."

In all, 88 colleagues downtown and 41 at north Naples, with 15 members of the NCH Healthcare Group including **Luis Trujillo** a patient favorite phlebotomist at Edison Village, handle about 4,500 specimens per day. Each year, three specialists at each campus are recognized by colleagues for outstanding performance and service. This year's honorees were: downtown technical **Esmeraldha Pierre**, support **Nancy Thompson** and customer service **Melissa Miller**, along with north Naples technical **Peter Kubetschek**, support **Aylet Quintero**, and customer service **Alfaquenia Perez**.

Our labs are perfect examples of how a highly competent healthcare team can produce consistently high-quality results to benefit an entire community. At NCH, in fact, every week is "Lab Week."

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 to be added.