

August 9, 2012

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

One of the most fascinating and rewarding experiences of our recently-completed—and outstanding!—Joint Commission review was accompanying the senior physician surveyor as he traced a cancer therapy medication, administered to an outpatient oncology patient at the North Naples Out-Patient Infusion Service (OPIS). The Joint Commission experts purposely focus on complicated areas of high risk to ensure we are functioning as safely as possible.

Treating a cancer patient with chemotherapy starts with confirming the physician's orders, triple checking that the right medication is given to the right patient at the right time. Board Certified oncology pharmacist Jeff Weiss (no relation), working directly with our team of oncologists, supervised every step of the electronic ordering process. This is imperative as cancer medications are powerful and can have serious harmful effects if not carefully monitored and administered only after laboratory data is checked to make sure the patient is ready for the treatment. The oncology pharmacist provided the 1st check of the patient's chemotherapy regimen. The 2nd check of the chemotherapy regimen was then completed by a clinical pharmacist, often one of the pharmacy supervisors—**Sheila Markham**, **Maria Esposito** or **Laurence Bosse**. The 3rd pharmacy check was completed by the out-patient infusion pharmacist **Connie Martinez**, who supervised pharmacy technician **Maria Alvarez** in sterile compounding of the medication and again verified the orders with the medication as it was actually labeled. **Gail Hill** was the primary pharmacist the day we visited.

Once these checks were completed, OPIS RN **Maria Cox**, also the Charge Nurse, administered the chemotherapy medication. Here too, an additional second check by an RN colleague and administrative nurse, **Susan Lynn-Butler**, was initiated. Our oncology pharmacists are consulted on about 100 chemotherapy regimens per month and OPIS dispenses about 400 oncology medications per month. NCH hospital pharmacies dispense 230,000 medications monthly. Even with this volume, the safety record for chemotherapy medication at NCH is remarkable. While we must always protect against overconfidence, our team can still feel proud of an extraordinary, long-term performance. Understandably, the nurses in OPIS get great patient feedback for care and compassion, especially when many patients have recurrent treatments.

Speaking of compassion, I also received the following note from a nurse colleague recently, whose cousin visited the emergency department on North Campus and was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer:

- *“My cousin does not have health insurance. The social work department put us in touch with **Lynn Hurley**, the breast health navigator with the foundation. She is amazing. Within minutes, she had scheduled follow-up tests and most importantly given my family some peace in this most devastating time with the financial help that she was able to offer. I am an employee of NCH and a nurse, and I was and continue to be so proud of our organization. I just wanted to send my gratitude and inform you of this truly amazing employee.”*

Finally, two other “amazing” friends of NCH, **Thelma** and **Earl Hodges**, are being recognized this month throughout southwest Florida for their contributions to the community. Thelma was the third employee of NCH, a charge nurse when we opened with 50 beds and 10 physicians a half century ago. She has been with us ever since in one capacity or another. Following her retirement, she continued with the hospital auxiliary and has accumulated more than 15,000 hours (the equivalent of another 8+ years of employment!). Thelma claims to be the first to truly say, “*This Is My Hospital*”—and who can doubt her!

Thanks, Thelma and Earl, Lynn Hurley, and the Pharmacy team. And thank you all, for making NCH what it has become for every citizen of our great community.

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.