

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



November 30, 2007

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This week, I'd like to raise several important procedural issues, gleaned from discussions with many of you this week. These are based on three lunch meetings I had this week with 3 South, Admitting Downtown and with the Social Workers /Utilization/Case Management folks. I also spent time at North Naples, which is at capacity.

- One significant concern we discussed at the lunch meetings were transfers from nursing homes to NCH without adequate and/or correct information. As you know, this has become a "hot button" issue in the community. We continue to work with the referring institutions to make sure we have the necessary medical and demographic information to optimize care. This is one of many opportunities we have to truly help people when they are most vulnerable. And we must ensure that our procedures are foolproof.
- There is also continuing concern around the system about having the time to help families through the crisis of an unexpected hospitalization. This is a common problem since about 60% of inpatients come through the ER. (We should always remember that when the patient woke up that morning, he or she was not planning to spend the next night in a hospital.) I've asked Tracey King to map out a plan so that our nursing and social service teams can spend more time with families in these situations.
- We also need to employ increased vigilance in recording the type of admitting category, be that in-patient or observation. This designation affects our reimbursement, and that is key for healthy financials. So this, too, is a core critical procedure.

Overall, we are certainly busy. The census has picked up and the ER and ORs are hopping. Even though some say the economy is shaky and may be worsening, people will always need health care. We are fortunate to be able to provide quality care for our community. And I'm pleased to note that this week, we added a large incoming group of new NCH employees, including almost 20 nurses, to help us accomplish our task.

Adding to our challenge in a weaker economy is that the number of people with no insurance or inadequate insurance has increased, as have the number of people with serious mental health problems. A weaker economy makes medical insurance less affordable for many. Related, I believe, is the increased number of patients hospitalized under the Baker Acts category (people who are potentially harmful to themselves or others because of mental illness).

But regardless of the external environment, our task at NCH continues uninterrupted. Let's continue to work together – regardless of outside pressures – to help the community by caring for all those who seek our help. My thanks to each of you for the important work you do, every day, to fulfill our noble mission.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Allen".

Allen S. Weiss, MD
President and CEO