April 25, 2013

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We adopted five major initiatives at our recent annual Board retreat, all designed to reinforce NCH as the region's healthcare leader and underscore our region as the healthiest in the state.

As these are the five mandates that will carry us forward, I'd like to devote this *Straight Talk* and next week's issue, as well, to elaborating on our initiatives. Here are the first three.

- 1. **Grow the capacity of the primary care network.** This means adding high quality physicians, physicians' assistants, and nurse practitioners to Southwest Florida and embracing new ways of communicating and sharing information to improve access. Traditionally, southwest Florida has attracted physicians desiring independence. Fortunately for most physicians—including me!—this independent model was successful for decades. Today's environment, however, suggests more consolidation as healthcare becomes more complicated and capital intensive; with a greater need to establish offices with computers and organized teams better able to cope with the accelerating change. A great example is the NCH Physician Group (NCH Physician Group), which is growing rapidly, providing a home for patients, and a stable "backbone" for primary care physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants as well as cardiologists and other medical and surgical specialists.
- 2. Integrate care to create seamless boundaries so patients avoid inconvenience and waste. The goal today is for patients to avoid the hospital as they travel through the healthcare continuum—from an electronic visit at home to Wellness Center, pharmacy, primary care office (pediatrician, gynecologist, family medicine, internist depending on one's stage of life), diagnostic center, urgent care center, out-patient surgery center, rehabilitation center, skilled care facility, and hopefully back home. Integration in this process becomes paramount. How can all of these caregivers coordinate care among themselves? If hospitalization is warranted, how we can standardize care with the inpatient physicians and hospitalists? We don't have all the answers, but framing the question and addressing priority needs of patients are good starting points.
- 3. **Strengthen our already-robust NCH information technology network.** NCH was recognized as among the 250 Most-Wired healthcare systems in the country last year. This communication backbone, which encourages easy access and safe sharing of medical records, will become even more important as we improve the value of health care. Already we have instant access to radiology images at remote locations, so physicians may view studies at any time at anyplace with internet access. Such instant analysis is imperative in enabling hospitals such as NCH to achieve the level of quality and value that our citizens deserve and have come to expect.

We must live up to these longer-term priorities, while at the same time ensuring the highest level of service in our day-to-day operations. For example, this week we celebrate *National Medical Laboratory Week* by commending our lab, which reported an astounding 4.1 million results last year, an increase of 30% since assimilating the NCH Physician Group. Recently, a technologist found an unusual test result, a positive ANCA (anti-neutrophil cytoplasmic antibodies). The referring physician credited this find with helping save the patient's life, by diagnosing Wegener's Granulomatosis, a dangerous and rare inflammatory disease. Improving the immediate and long-term quality of life is what it is all about.

Respectfully,

Allen S. Weiss, M.D., President and CEO

P.S. DO YOU HAVE A COLLEAGUE OR FRIEND WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THESE UPDATES? Please enter their email address below, and we will add them to our complimentary mailing list. No cost or obligation. And of course they may unsubscribe at any point they find the content uninteresting. Just enter their email address, and

we shall send them a "Welcome" note, indicating you have recommended them to receive the newsletter (again, this is free and without obligation of any sort).

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