

# Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



September 5, 2013

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

More than a century ago, the microbiologist Louis Pasteur said, "*Chance favors only the prepared mind.*" By this he meant that sudden flashes of insight don't just happen—they are the products of preparation.

Dr. Pasteur's words are particularly apt for the American Cancer Society, which has made such significant strides in understanding the causes of cancer as an effective way to prevent this most dreaded of diseases. NCH supports this effort, as we assist in the Cancer Prevention Study-3 by encouraging at least 125 residents between the ages of 30-65 to participate on each campus: October 2 downtown and October 3 at North Naples.

The American Cancer Society had initial success in 1955 linking smoking to lung cancer. The lead epidemiologist, Dr. Morton L. Levine, was at the Roswell Park Memorial Institute in Buffalo, NY, where he was recruited to look for an association between viruses and cancer. He designed a hospital intake questionnaire which was completed by patients with cancer and those without cancer. After a few years, Dr. Levine and his colleagues noted the statistically significant association between lung cancer and smoking. Keep in mind, this was a time when everyone—including physicians—thought nothing of smoking. From Dr. Levine's seminal study, two other landmark studies have successfully shown the association of obesity with cancer (particularly esophagus, pancreas, colon, endometrium, kidney, thyroid, gall bladder, and breast) and alcohol with cancer (oral, esophageal, and liver cancer, colon, and breast).

I cite this wonderful story of scientific discovery, which has helped all of us live longer, happier, and healthier lives, because I had the privilege and pleasure of being a National Science Foundation summer high school student working for the famous Dr. Levine. Years after this very important discovery, his team was still looking for other causes for and ways to fight cancer, as we are now encouraging our own community to do.

While treatment has improved for various forms of cancer—leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, and testicular—we still have miles to go. Sadly, lung cancer, the most common cancer in our country, kills more than 150,000 people per year. The age-adjusted mortality rate for cancer is essentially unchanged over the past half-century, at about 200 deaths per 100,000 people; this, despite the fact President Richard Nixon famously declared a "war on cancer" more than 30 years ago. Worst of all, the incidence of cancer is on the rise, which is exactly why our current epidemiological study directed by the American Cancer Society at NCH is so critical.

So what can each of us do to prevent this potential killer from invading our lives?

We can start by enrolling in our study at [www.cancer.org/cps3florida](http://www.cancer.org/cps3florida) or calling 888 604 5888 by September 18. The initial intake includes a confidential questionnaire and a small blood sample, which will be frozen for further use if needed. The study is expected to last 20 years, and periodically you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire. The goal is to better understand the factors (lifestyle, environmental, genetic) that cause or prevent cancer, and ultimately, to help eliminate cancer as a major health concern for future generations.

Prevention is always better than treatment. One of NCH's primary goals, of course, is to enhance the health of our community. Collaborating with distinguished colleagues such as the American Cancer Society to prepare, study, assess and make progress is a perfect example of our goal to improve everyone's quality of life.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allen".

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

***P.S. DO YOU HAVE A COLLEAGUE OR FRIEND WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THESE UPDATES?***

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