

December 26, 2013

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

You may not recall, but in the first *Straight Talk* of 2013, I made three general predictions about how NCH and healthcare would contribute to the quality of life during the year to come. It's now 51 weeks later, and the year 2013 has been a notable one in many respects for NCH. So it's time to see how Soothsayer Weiss fared.

- **Prediction #1: There will be a return to professionalism in healthcare.**

Here's what I wrote in January, "*The definition of a 'professional' is one who puts the interests of the client ahead of his or her own. Appropriateness of care is as important as quality and safety.*" The outcome with respect to professionalism in healthcare is still a bit mixed. The healthcare economy has grown beyond most everything else in our economy, partly for positive reasons of doing more but also for less good reasons of adding less necessary diagnostic tests and treatments. Sadly, outside regulators are still needed to police those who place quarterly returns ahead of a patient's or community's long-term welfare. Professionalism is still front and center in the minds of caregivers who put the interest of the patient ahead of their own. The trend towards altruism is growing, and I believe it will be more pervasive in the coming year.

- **Prediction #2: We will continue to grow the market, not just "market share."**

In January, I wrote, "*Southwest Florida has undergone cyclical booms and busts every 5-10 years during the 35 years I have had the pleasure of being a member of the community. Already our Mayo Clinic affiliation has attracted increasing numbers of patients from distant areas for diagnosis and care.*" Our Mayo affiliation continues to grow with new connections among the 20-plus other Mayo affiliates and as we assimilate more of the Mayo knowledge, tradition, and expertise. Our many Mayo collaborations have resulted in patients being helped, educational experiences completed, and research projects initiated. We have also formed a partnership with Florida Blue to provide better value for many of their insured patients who are also cared for by the NCH Physician Group.

- **Prediction #3: Focus on outpatient preventive care and population health will increase.**

I also said in January, "*In line with adding value, we will continue to transform ourselves from a repair shop to a patient care model, where our goals are prevention of illness, avoidance of expensive hospitalization, and improving the health of the population.*" This prediction will see fruition as we embark on our decade-long journey to become a "Blue Zone"—where residents live longer, happier, and healthier lives. Our goal is to decrease the need for inpatient hospitalization, grow outpatient services, and evolve more to home care and prevention. This past year we added 20 physicians to the NCH Physician Group, most of whom are primary care providers. We are leading by example as we encourage our own employees and their relatives covered under our insurance to lead healthier lives. Using appropriate incentives, many individuals and groups of employees are enjoying better health. And we fully intend that this more promising path will continue.

How do I grade the Soothsayer? Well, I think I was directionally correct but too optimistic in my hopes for time-to-completion. This healthcare journey is a 26-mile marathon, not a 5K race. We have made great strides, but there is still much to do. Next week, I'll take a crack at predictions for 2014. Meanwhile, Happy New Year to all.

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?

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