January 4, 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I wrote last week that one of our priorities in this new year will be to emphasize two-way communications, listening to your suggestions, acting on them when possible, and keeping you informed about important NCH-related information. Toward that end, here's where we stand on three key items.

<u>FIRST</u>, the union. I imagine most of you are as frustrated as I am that this union uncertainty continues. We are still awaiting word from the National Labor Relations Board as to whether they will grant our request to allow all NCH registered nurses to vote. Frankly, this entire process has taken far longer than any of us expected. I do hope we're getting to the end of it. After this experience, I am more convinced than ever that having outsiders trying to direct our local healthcare activities is counterproductive.

There is no question in my mind direct communication between a committed staff and a concerned management is the best solution. The last thing NCH needs is indifferent outsiders getting in the middle.

SECOND, regardless of the union outcome, quality care remains our number one priority. We have built an outstanding system, delivering compassionate care daily to everyone we serve. For the first quarter of our financial year, starting on October 1, we have had an increase in admissions of 0.4%. Although this is modest, we must consider the overall state of economy in our county, and plan accordingly for more patients, either without insurance or under-insured.

Adding value by improving quality while decreasing costs continues to be the goal of our 11 Juran value projects. Additionally, six new project teams will start next week, focused on the revenue cycle, controlling supply costs and patient falls. These 17 projects are designed to enhance both clinical and business processes. We need both to ensure quality care for patients.

<u>THIRD</u>, let me mention a few projects that we've initiated from our recent campus rounds. All grew out of your suggestions.

- One of our experienced nurses recommended a particular device to assist in the challenge of moving heavy patients. We are examining it now.
- You asked that we review our policies with respect to care for Baker Act patients, who can't be accommodated in the units and have to be placed on a regular floor. We are reviewing now with outside experts and will report back to you.
- You asked about pricing practices in the cafeteria and the availability of the grill on weekends and some
  weekdays. We now have prices listed at North Naples and are redistributing personnel between the two campuses
  to deal with off hours.

Finally, I hope to see you next Monday and Tuesday at our next round of *Around the Clocks*, both day and night and at all four of our locations. Please check MyNCH.org or with your Unit Director for times and locations. These are open, town hall style meetings with one purpose – to listen to you and to act on your suggestions.

Respectfully,

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