

# Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most

February 1, 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This week, we received word that for the fourth consecutive year, the NCH Healthcare System has ranked among **the nation's top 5% of hospitals**, according to an independent study of mortality and complication rates by HealthGrades, the nation's leading healthcare ratings company.

As such, NCH has achieved HealthGrades' 2008 Distinguished Hospital Award for Clinical Excellence™ based on clinical quality performance.

Congratulations, one and all.

According to the HealthGrades study, patients admitted to a hospital receiving this award are, on average, 27% less likely to face mortality and 5% less likely to suffer from a major complication. NCH was one of only 269 of the nation's 4,971 non-federal hospitals to receive this distinction.

Four straight years of ranking in this distinguished position is a testimony to the extraordinary efforts of all of our NCH caregivers and physicians. It is because of your hard work that our patients and their families receive the highest quality health care. And the best news, as this recognition shows: Your efforts to ensure quality and safety really do matter to our patients.

In a related sense, our nursing staff just completed its bi-annual survey of pressure sores, which most commonly develop on the sacral area or heel in a debilitated elderly patient. This can lead to an ulcer, which increases the chance of mortality. Only vigilant nursing care can help prevent these skin breakdowns. Nationally there is a 6% to 7% incidence of ulcers. At North Naples over the last six months, there were none, while Downtown recorded 2.1%. These stellar numbers, based on consistently superior caregiving, translate into saving lives.

I'm pleased to report that we have already attained our goal of 85% compliance Downtown in terms of the medication administration process, rolled out just two weeks ago. That means that 85% of all medications are administered using a bar code reader – the same wand-like device used in the supermarket – to match the patient, medication and nurse. While this process may take a bit more time, it's worth it in terms of accuracy and safety, and it allows nurses to feel more comfortable about medication delivery. North Naples has been on this system almost since the opening of the Baker Tower a year ago.

So I'm delighted that NCH quality improvement continues, even as our patient volumes increase – up nearly 2% thus far this fiscal year. The less good news is that in light of the uncertain economy, our payer mix is not as good as in past years, due to the increased numbers of uninsured and under-insured people. It remains important that we all prudently manage our resources so that we can continue to serve the community with the high level of quality care that has earned us consistent national recognition.

Respectfully,



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