

September 18, 2008

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Last week, we had a bit of a surreal experience. A scheduled three-day *mock* survey of our two hospitals in preparation for our regular audit by the Joint Commission for Accreditation of Hospitals Organization (JCAHO) collided with a *real*, unannounced survey of our two clinical laboratories by the College of American Pathologists (CAP).

Our mock JCAHO survey was an early step in preparation for the real survey, which we anticipate some time in 2009. Our next practice JCAHO survey is planned for next month. In the interim, Rodney Judd, Director of Regulatory Compliance, and his highly skilled and motivated team will be helping us address issues highlighted during last week's mock survey, led by three experienced former JCAHO surveyors.

Meanwhile, last week's *real* two-day CAP survey, conducted by 12 examiners, went very well. The survey leader, a pathologist from Miami, reported that of a total of 1,000 questions or points, we missed only 12. He characterized our performance as "*a very good result.*" We're already at work with "fixes" in the 12 areas designated.

The laboratory team is to be commended for an excellent performance, particularly considering the major changes last year, in first separating from the core lab in Ft. Myers and then installing twin high-capacity processing machines on each campus. Congratulations to all, and in particular, Jodi Swarouth who led the NCH team.

Why, you may ask, do we invest such time and resources in preparing for these audits? For one thing, we live in a regulated world, and our activities must be transparent. When outside, impartial, knowledgeable examiners like those at JCAHO review and validate our policies, processes and outcomes, that not only strengthens community confidence in our quality and safety but also makes us better care givers.

For another thing, there really are no secrets in medicine. That's a good thing. It's to everyone's benefit that patients today can choose where to have elective surgery and even where to be taken in the event of a medical emergency. NCH, therefore, profits greatly from its reputation of excellence and also from receiving the "*seal of approval*" from nationally-recognized organizations that rank quality and safety.

In the words of Holly Teach, a nurse colleague who hosted one of the three mock surveyors last week, "*We must always be survey ready*"—with a neat and clean workplace and clear explanation of our policies and processes. Education is key to improvement. As such, Dora Krauss' Educational team will also be leaders going forward. Such preparedness will benefit our community, our hospital's reputation, and, most of all, our patients.

Respectfully,



Allen S. Weiss, M.D.