

April 2, 2009

## Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Two weekends ago, cardiovascular recovery room nurse Beth Johnston was relaxing on Vanderbilt Beach when, as recounted by ICU Unit Director Jon Kling, "a distraught father came running out of the water holding his lifeless two-year-old baby." Beth immediately started CPR and was able to get the baby's heart rate and breathing to return. The baby was sent to North Naples ER and spent the next day in the pediatric unit. A day later, the baby was back at home, safe and sound.

Beth's inspirational save, combined with our capability at NCH to care for children—from birth through adolescence—is another example of the life-saving changes that have occurred in Collier County healthcare delivery. A few years ago, before our spectacular 24-bed MacDonald SeaCAREium existed, this child might have faced a much different outcome in an out-of-town facility.

Pediatric care in Collier County has come so far, even over just the past two years.

As a parent, the only thing more stressful and frightening than having a sick child is having to hospitalize that child far from home. Shortly after the new Baker Tower was completed, Dr. Deborah Lopez and her colleagues began 24/7 coverage of the Pediatric Unit, to enable us to care for much sicker children. Our 32 pediatricians, along with many nursing and ancillary staff members, are now able to care for 22% more children closer to home as our in-patient admissions have increased year over year.

Precious newborns, in particular, require specialized care, especially if they are premature or experience problems during birth. The first few moments of a baby's life can be critical. That's why we have been so fortunate to have dedicated neonatologists staffing the Birth Center. Currently we deliver over 3,800 babies per year. For the past two months, we have realized 24/7/365 in-house coverage with neonatologists. Having round-the-clock, Board Certified neonatologists physically in the Birth Center allows new moms to sleep a little better. We also offer round-the-clock anesthesia availability for moms about to deliver. Having both these specialties, available at all hours in-house, makes for a better and safer experience.

We are constantly adding to our pediatrics capability. Recently, Dr. Albert Titus, a surgeon with additional experience in pediatrics, has focused his pediatric practice in the MacDonald SeaCAREium unit. Dr. Titus has performed more than 20 surgeries over the past few weeks. An important part of any pediatric surgery is the anesthesiologist, and here, too, we are fortunate to have a superior professional in Dr. William Caldwell, who is also trained in pediatrics.

My point is that while all the bricks and mortar and sophisticated equipment are necessary, they alone are not sufficient to provide quality care for our patients. Most important are the people—the physicians, nurses, and all the clinical and support people, from respiratory therapists to dieticians to everyone else who cares for patients at NCH.

Dr. Todd Vedder, a pediatric leader, has been and continues to be a strong advocate for all of the changes and growth in our Pediatrics Department. In fact, he gave me the idea for the subject for this week's "Straight Talk." Thanks, Todd.

Respectfully,

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

P. S. Feel free to share *Straight Talk* and ask anyone to email me at <u>allen.weiss@nchmd.org</u> to be added.