

July 23, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

We have so much to be proud of at NCH as our high quality was again validated. Last Friday, the Joint Commission, the independent organization that accredits and certifies more than 15,000 U.S. healthcare entities, completed its anticipated but unannounced five-member five-day audit of our campuses. Given the preliminary written and verbal feedback we received, it was the best Joint Commission survey we have had in the past decade.

The Joint Commission administrative surveyor said NCH was "one of the best hospitals I've surveyed in over 15 years." And the senior surveyor concluded, "This hospital is on a continuous journey—a very, very good organization." (Official results will be posted in the near future at http://www.jointcommission.org.)

This high praise indeed is a testimony to the hard work of all 3,400 colleagues and 604 Medical Staff members who serve our community. There were so many colleagues who interacted with our five surveyors which makes it impossible for me to mention everyone by name. I am sharing the names of the folks who I personally saw with the surveyor I followed.

The Joint Commission examiners went almost everywhere on both clinical campuses, tracing actual inpatient and outpatient experiences. Holly Teach and I sat in on many interviews, directed by the administrative surveyor. I was so proud of our team as Linda McDowell, Kathleen Elmeus, Janice McNeal, Ethel Peterson, Bob Streicher, Jan Czaplewski, Michelle Maddux, Randy Lowry, Judy Prince, Greg Wilkenson, Sherrie Arnes, Judy Agos, Annie MacLean, Julio Mendez, Jo Novotny, Caroline Paget and a few other "targets of opportunity" talked about their duties. As to the patients interviewed by Joint Commission surveyors, the overwhelming response was that they were receiving excellent and compassionate care.

Surveyors also chose to examine and "walk through" several NCH systems, such as disaster preparedness, infection control, medical staff credentialing, medication administration, etc. We have no advance warning as to which system they choose to examine. The one they selected was a "hurricane scenario"—always top-of-mind for our disaster preparedness team. After putting the team through its paces, one Joint Commissioner said, "I'm coming here the next time we have a hurricane!" (Even so, let's hope we have a quiet season!)

We also received several suggestions for improvement. For example, we will accelerate our journey to go paperless. As I've reported, we've been moving in the direction of going fully digital with computer provider order entry. We still need to simplify some of the digital documentation that nurses use. And we need to be more diligent with "time outs," before starting procedures. We are already at work on these items.

Most gratifying of all, even after the surveyors left, NCH team members were hard at work improving our service. At 5:00 p.m. Friday, I got on the elevator at 6S, when transporter **Eddy Ramos** was getting off with a wheelchair. As I got on, he asked that I hold the door open, while he ran to grab some paper towels to wipe up a small spill on the elevator floor. Eddy had no idea when the elevator door opened that the CEO would be the person he would ask to hold the door. But he is typical of the dedication to service that pervades NCH. The surveyors were gone, but Eddy was still on the case.

Finally, let me recognize **Rodney Judd**, Director of Regulatory Compliance and Patient Advocacy, along with **Mark Milner**, Director of Clinical Outcomes Management, for their leadership as we build upon our successes. Being a member of this extraordinary team, responsible for this extraordinary healthcare organization, is clearly the best part of my job. My sincere thanks to all for a job well done.

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.