

September 24, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Women consume more health care and make the majority of all health care decisions. Nonetheless, women also hold the unfortunate distinction of being under-diagnosed when it comes to heart disease and other serious conditions that lead to greater complications.

At NCH, we're confronting this issue of women's health care with a comprehensive approach. Administrative Director **Pat Read** and her team have developed a virtual Women's Center, with services ranging from reproductive issues to cancer detection/treatment and everything in-between—all designed expressly for women. Here are some of the most prominent aspects of our approach to women's health.

- **The Birth Place.** Last Friday, our Birth Place delivered 20 new babies, which served as a fitting welcome to new Director of Women's and Children's services, **Vicki Farsoun**. Our 27 Board Certified Obstetricians/Gynecologists expect to deliver some 3,300 babies this year. That figure, down from our peak years, parallels the general decline in both our public schools and community populations. The Birth Place prides itself on providing a better and safer experience for moms and newborns, through the 24/7/365 presence of in-house, Board-certified neonatologists and anesthesia services. As testimony to our efforts, the county's infant mortality rate is 5.9%, compared to 7.1% for the State of Florida. Many of the babies are delivered by the Women's Health Foundation (WHF), created 10 years ago by a group of NCH obstetricians. The WHF, along with CHS Healthcare (Collier Health Services) provides most everyone in need with high quality, comprehensive pre-natal care.

The Birth Place provides many other services to assist growing families. **Stephanie Piver**, our community perinatal educator, recently organized our first Pre-Natal Retreat Weekend at the Coconut Point Hyatt, at which a diverse group of expectant couples learned about pre-natal care, delivery, post-partum and newborn care. One attendee, first time mom-to-be **Patty Bores** (who is an NCH physical therapist), said she and her husband "absolutely loved what was truly a bonding experience." Stephanie has also organized prenatal classes in different languages and locations. We've also introduced more varied diet choices to match patient desires. And we've got committed lactation specialist nurses, such as **Debbie Albert** and **Maria Winschel**, who assist new moms with education as long as it's needed. We also are sensitive to families who have suffered the loss of a baby. As part of our bereavement team, RNs **Melissa Michel**, **Denise Rivera**, **Michelle Schwing**, and **Diane Yasko** have organized a caring "Night of Remembrance."

- **Connie Eaton Women's Center.** RN **Jennifer Stanley** and her team assist women with medical and surgical illnesses on the recently-redecorated 4 West wing of the Baker Tower on the North Naples Campus. Jennifer's creativity also led to a grant from the Susan G. Komen Foundation, to designate RN **Audra Rawson** as a breast health patient navigator, to help women with any problem related to breast care. October is Breast Awareness Month (www.nbcam.org), so the timing of Audra's position is fortuitous. NCH is also a partner in the March 10, 2010 Race for the Cure with 75% of the donated funds coming back to our community and the rest going to research.

Our high quality of women's health care has been validated once again by HealthGrades, an independent rating agency (www.HealthGrades.com), which continues to rate NCH in the Top 5% in Women's Health and Best in Region for Maternity Care. In women's health care, then, as in many other areas (we are also ranked #1 in Florida for cardiac care), NCH continues to lead the way in safeguarding our community's health.

Respectfully,



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

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