

November 25, 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

As healthcare reform rumbles down the legislative track nationally, NCH continues to make progress locally on delivering quality healthcare. Last week, we were busy on both fronts.

On the national scene, COO **Phil Dutcher** and I visited Capital Hill last week. Our Florida delegation of legislators continues to be a strong voice in Washington, focused on the issues that will affect all of us. Among the most prominent of these are the following:

- We need to obtain appropriate Medicaid reimbursement for Florida. Our state ranks among the top three states in the nation in terms of uninsured, with more than 20% of Florida citizens uninsured. At the same time, Florida stands among the lowest four states in terms of allotment per person from Medicaid. That's simply unfair and must be redressed.
- Meanwhile, Florida has the highest percentage of people on Medicare—insurance for those over 65 or disabled. Many of these individuals have lower health care status, no medical home or lack a secondary insurance. Our mild climate also means we have a large homeless population. Additionally, we have many non-citizens, who need—and receive—medical care, at least of the emergency variety. All these issues add to the cost per person to care for Florida's residents. And they all speak to the need for a geographic variation in healthcare payments.
- Finally, Florida has the third highest physician shortage in the country. We desperately need more residency positions in our state.

These are the kinds of critical issues that concern our legislators. Action is urgently needed. NCH leadership will continue to be active in seeking healthcare equity for our system and our state.

Here on the local front, our talented team of caregivers continues to make great strides.

Our five NCH neurosurgeons, **Drs. Rohit Rick Bhasin, Gary Colon, Paul Dernbach, Mark Gerber,** and **Michael Lusk**, have now provided feedback on their program. The results are encouraging. Post-operative care in our ICUs and on 6 South is superb. Radiology services are fast and comprehensive. To improve further, we will codify pre- and post-operative orders electronically, using computer provider order entry (CPOE) for common operations, such as low back or neck surgery. We will consider Dr. Bhasin's recommendations for Stereotactic Image Guidance (CT like imaging) during brain surgery and spinal surgeries, which is an advanced technology he studied at the University of Florida in Gainesville. We are also investigating opportunities to service neurosurgeons' patients in other areas. Our challenge, always, is to ensure that outstanding performance just keeps improving. But all in all, as **Dr. Lusk** puts it, "With our comprehensive and highly skilled nursing units, NCH is where you want to be if you're sick."

Excellent performance deserves reward and recognition. This week we delivered the 1.5% Board-approved discretionary bonus for all eligible colleagues. We've also got our *Key Contributor Awards* of \$1,000 for 111 colleagues who consistently go above and beyond in terms of attitude and competence. And finally, today our hard-working dietary team led by **Lee Ameida** (DNH) and **Tony Miraglia** (NNH) is helping the leadership team serve a traditional Thanksgiving meal to everyone working at lunch, dinner and again at 11:00 PM. Happy Thanksgiving to all, and thank you for all you do to make us great.

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.