

January 14, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Natural disasters strike with unexpected suddenness and ferocity. Such, tragically, is the case with the earthquake in Haiti, where many of our colleagues have families, relatives and friends on the island.

The night after the earthquake, Interim Chief Nursing Officer **Michele Thoman** emailed me the question on all of our minds: “*What can we do?*” We have begun to answer that question. RN **Mark Pitts**, Director of Occupational Health, and **Reverend Michael Harper** shared their concerns for the survivors here and started to console colleagues, most of whom knew little about the status of loved ones.

Human Resources, led by Chief Human Resources Officer **Brian Settle** and Director **Renee Thigpen**, is organizing NCH efforts to help in two broad categories: (1) Immediately helping people care for themselves; and (2) Providing longer-term help for Haiti and disaster relief.

- In terms of ***immediate care***, Horizon Health, our employee assistance mental health counselor, has brought on board two individuals fluent in Creole, in addition to its fully-trained staff. Horizon Health stresses this important point, “*Disasters, such as this earthquake, can result in extreme emotions including stress, helplessness, fear, irritability, anger and depression. One may also suffer from nightmares, shock, loss of appetite and the inability to concentrate. All of these reactions and feelings are normal; but if you do not address them, you can jeopardize your health.*”

How can you deal with these effects? Horizon Health suggests the following:

1. Have realistic expectations and goals, and be patient with yourself.
 2. Reach out to supportive friends and family for comfort and guidance.
 3. Give yourself plenty of time to recover and rest.
 4. Try to maintain a nutritious diet to keep your energy up.
 5. Focus on your breathing—deep, slow breaths will help calm you.
 6. Join a support group. (You can find support groups through human resources.)
- As to ***longer-term relief***, we ask our colleagues to please consider donating to *Partners in Caring*, which is our own employee assistance fund directed by employees. NCH will match these donations dollar for dollar. We will ask that the distribution of funds go to NCH employees whose families and relatives have been affected by this tragedy. We have had similar relief funds in the past, for colleagues victimized by hurricanes, fires, and other disasters or tragedies. Other ways to help include donating to the *American Red Cross* and *Hope for Haiti*.

Responding to a disaster that has hit so close to home, underscores the point that “*we are all in this together.*” Please join me in helping our colleagues, their families and loved ones affected by this tragedy. Thank you.

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.