

Straight Talk

A weekly update from management on the issues that matter most



February 25, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Healthcare information is constantly improving. And the best healthcare providers are those who are constantly learning.

At NCH, we value continuing education as a way to ensure that our patients will do well. In that context, we were pleased last week to welcome Dr. Peter Pronovost of the famed Johns Hopkins Medical School, who shared his passion for patient safety with a Telford Auditorium full of concerned, competent and compassionate NCH caregivers. Also joining us were Dr. Myron Weisfeldt, the William Osler Professor of Medicine and Director of Medicine, and Mr. Michael Armstrong, Chairman of the Board of Johns Hopkins. We are proud to enjoy such strong relations with our nation's finest healthcare institutions.

Dr. Pronovost, an MD/PhD, is noted for his groundbreaking work on preventing catheter-related blood stream infections, which kill as many as 60,000 patients every year in our country. In a pilot program, using a simple checklist and teamwork tools in Michigan hospitals, about 2,000 lives (and \$200 million) were saved in the first year. Other states, including Florida, are now using Dr. Pronovost's techniques. **Dr. Tracey King**, NCH's key contact and I are active participants in Florida Hospital Association's ongoing assimilation of these kinds of best practices.

At his NCH talk, Dr. Pronovost was very much "*preaching to the choir.*" He recounted the tragic and unnecessary death of a three-year-old Hopkins patient a decade ago, highlighting the same goals we encourage at NCH—collaboration versus competition, interdependence versus independence, and results versus effort.

Dr. Pronovost related conversations among Hopkins physicians, nurses, and all the front-line caregivers involved in patient care. He stressed the importance of individual units asking themselves the key questions: "*What is the most likely way the next patient will be hurt? And most important, how can we prevent this?*"

Many fine medical institutions, including NCH, have emulated Johns Hopkins' evolving focus on patient safety and quality of care. When there is a problem—an incident—we need to ask: *What happened? Why did it happen? How can we reduce the risk? And finally, How do we know we reduced the risk?* (www.safercare.net) The sobering statistics concerning preventable deaths have been motivating us for a decade, as we continue to embrace the three goals of demonstrated quality, operational efficiency and fiscal responsibility.

Like Johns Hopkins, at NCH we recognize that improving patient safety and quality is a continuous journey. Measuring progress, defining quality, examining process versus outcomes must be ongoing. And knowing *where* we are going—having a goal, a destination—will keep us both focused and humble as we work to continuously improve. It's gratifying that NCH has been recognized many times over the last five years by independent agencies for delivering quality healthcare; most recently, two weeks ago, for having the best health outcomes among the 67 counties in Florida, based on mortality and morbidity.

Key to supporting our mission of delivering the finest quality healthcare is the work of our NCH Foundation. Last week, the Foundation welcomed **Jim Martin** as Chief Development Officer. Jim has had 28 productive years of leadership experience, mostly with large healthcare institutions. We gratefully thank **Connie Dillon** who very successfully led our Foundation through this transition and will be working closely with Jim to continue our mission. Connie and Jim, like all of us, are committed to the constant improvement of NCH, in a continuous journey to deliver unquestioned safety and quality to our patients.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allen".

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.