

**Annual Meeting
Southcoast Health System
December 13, 2011**

Remarks of Robert Caldas, DO

Note: Ellipsis < ... > signifies slight pause

Thank you, Keith.

I am pleased to be addressing you in my new role of Chief Medical Officer for Southcoast Health System.

I may be new to Southcoast as an administrator, but I am no stranger to South Coast as a region. I grew up in this area and spent 23 years in a predominantly Portuguese-speaking practice. I have also been active in Medical Staff affairs serving on several committees and as Chair of the Department of Family Practice at St. Luke's. The combination of these experiences has provided me with a unique perspective of viewing the delivery of patient care from the perspectives of both the practitioner and the health system.

But whether looking at things from the system side or the physician side, I know one thing. If we are not doing everything we can to view health care from the patient's perspective, we all fail at our mission of being healers. The provision of quality, integrated and comprehensive patient care is the prime directive for all of us. And doing so does not end with the quality of our clinical outcomes — with how well we heal the body. We also must consider the quality of human interactions — what we have come to know as the patient experience.

- Are we making it easy for the patient to get care?

- Do we help our patients understand what is happening to them and what we are doing to help them?
- Do we engage our patients as partners in their own care?
- Do we work together for the common good of the patient?

These issues become even more important as we transition into the new world order of health care — where we will no longer be paid for simply providing a service but reimbursed according to the level of the quality of that service and how healthy we keep a patient population as well as how we treat them when they are ill. What is also true is that we can no longer work in silos. As health administrators, physicians and clinicians, we need to work as a fully integrated team for the benefit of our patients.

And I do mean “our” patients. Any patient that comes under our care is not the sole responsibility of any single one of us — that patient is the responsibility of *all* of us.

The best way to serve our patients is through a strong, comprehensive integrated system — which is what Southcoast is. With the help of our physicians, Southcoast has made some great achievements this year in further integrating care so that patients remain the focus of our efforts.

- The newly-opened Southcoast Centers for Cancer Care in Fairhaven, is bringing comprehensive, coordinated cancer care under one roof. Combined with the great work already taking place in Fall River, cancer patients on the South Coast now have the only seamless, end-to-end regional solution for cancer care.
- The new medical office building at Rosebrook in Wareham brings together primary care and specialty medicine, making it convenient for our patients as well as our clinicians, who can now more easily collaborate with their colleagues on care plans.

- And our physicians are aligned in developing new quality programs that directly benefit our patients. And we have expanded the reach of our specialists so that they are available across the region — not just in a single location.

But to truly integrate services for our patients, we too, need to integrate — physicians, administration, system staff and trustees — and that means increased and better communication. We have made great strides in this area — from our clinical Care Centers that focus all of their efforts on the care of the patient throughout their disease or injury to the ongoing transition to electronic medical records that will provide secure and immediate access to the patient's entire medical record from almost any location. These are great steps that benefit everyone at Southcoast, but most importantly our patients.

After more than two decades, closing my practice was a big decision — and an emotional process. I had developed very close relationships with many of my patients. The fact that I spoke to them in their language — and had an intimate, first-hand understanding of their culture — meant a lot to them. It helped to dissipate their fear of the unfamiliar and demystify the health care world. Guiding my patients through tough times helped us develop a mutual trust and loyalty that meant a lot to them and energized me to continue. I think my most humbling moment came when I told a patient, many years my *senior*, that I would be closing my practice. He said, "You've been like a father to me."

His comment drove home — more than any — the responsibility we have to our patients. Simply put — the patient *must always* come first.

We all are familiar with the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." The same can be said for taking care of our patients. It takes everyone — from physicians and nurses and other caregivers ... to the many individuals from the entire landscape of the Southcoast organization...

to our administration and trustees—to provide a patient with the kind of quality health care that not only serves their immediate need but ushers them along the road to wellness and provides the experience that breeds understanding and trust.

Thank you.

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