As I write this column, I am thinking back to the many accomplishments and triumphs of 2005 and looking ahead to the challenges of 2006.

For Clarian and our partner, the Indiana University School of Medicine, 2005 was simply spectacular! LifeLine and Riley Critical Care Transport combined forces to create Indiana’s largest patient transport program; we saw the opening of Clarian North Medical Center; and watched our impressive new lab building take shape along the canal. We began construction on our expanded cancer facility and made plans for Riley’s new Phase V patient tower.

Last May, the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network released data showing The Clarian Transplant Center leading the nation in transplant volume, and 2005 marked the eighth consecutive year for Clarian, in partnership with the IU School of Medicine, to be ranked among the country’s best hospitals by U.S. News & World Report.

In December, we learned that Clarian had met very ambitious quality goals for the core Clarian downtown Indianapolis hospitals. The purpose of these quality goals and of focusing every person within Clarian on them is to provide better care using evidence and experience as our guide. Dr. Sam Flanders, senior vice president of Medical Quality, discusses this in more detail elsewhere in this newsletter.

I welcome the Serious Adverse Event Reporting Rules that went into effect January 1. Implementation of these rules is an important first step toward a comprehensive statewide reporting system that will help to prevent medical errors and improve patient care and safety throughout our state. We at Clarian are in many respects ahead of the curve on this, and are known nationally for addressing patient safety issues through innovative programs such as our electronic ICU, Safe Passage Program, Web-based incident reporting, our root-cause analysis process and many other initiatives. I challenge each of you to use these new reporting rules as an opportunity to raise the bar even higher for health care at Clarian and throughout Indiana. More information about the new rules is available on Pulse.

You may have read about Clarian’s vision for preeminence in health care in a recent issue of The Clarian or heard about it from your director. New employees have heard about it in Employee Orientation. Becoming a preeminent provider of health care means that the high quality of care provided at Clarian establishes the benchmark for care in our community. We become preeminent by striving for excellence and outstanding performance in everything.
The daughter of a patient recently wrote to Tammy Sarmiento, RN, to express gratitude for the care and support Tammy provided to her father in his last days. Here are a few excerpts from her letter.

“You were there for us through the hardest thing we have ever experienced. You were caring and compassionate, ... patient, ... explained everything in plain English ... I don’t know that I would have been able to face the truth without your help. ...

I am very thankful for how you handled it when we took him off life support. ...

If I can finish nursing school and be half the nurse you are, I can make him proud, and maybe I can help other people through hard times the way you did with us.”

(from the desk of Dan Evans continued...)

we do, from how we treat one another to how we clean our facilities to how we render clinical care. We must all work together to improve quality, achieve preeminence and ensure the best possible care for our patients and community.

Earlier this month we honored the life, work and memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with celebrations on our hospital campuses. These celebrations are an important part of our culture, and embrace the rich diversity within the Clarian family and our community.

This year’s Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure will be held Saturday, April 22. I am proud to tell you that Team Clarian has formed the largest team in the world for this event for the past eight years. The deadline to enroll as a member of Team Clarian for 2006 is Thursday, March 16. Contact Penny Johnson at pjohnson3@clarian.org or 962-4500 to request a registration packet.

Thank you, all of you, for a great 2005 and for your continuing dedication in 2006.

from the perspective of
Sam Flanders, MD
Senior Vice President of Medical Quality

CLARIAN QUALITY UPDATE – WHAT A YEAR 2005 WAS!

As we move into 2006, it’s a real pleasure to be able to report that Clarian’s downtown hospitals achieved their composite quality goal for 2005. We track our progress on a quality “matrix” that documents outcomes on about 560 items. We made great progress this by defining measurements, comparing ourselves to national data at the highest levels of performance (90th percentile), and setting plans in motion to improve items not at benchmark. Thanks to YOUR work, we’re proud to have achieved our 2005 target.

How did we do it? Here are a few of the highlights.

Some of the improvements came from better documentation of our care, but we also saw significant clinical improvements. For example, the CMS “core measures” (covering care for heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia) improved to the point where all but one measurement was above average, and half of the measures exceed the national 90th percentile benchmarks. We saw a substantial drop in risk-adjusted mortality at Methodist Hospital, thanks to a number of clinical programs aimed at reducing infection rates and preventing complications in our ICUs. Riley Hospital reached benchmark performance on the Anthem scorecard for steroid use in asthma and neonatal mortality, and Indiana University Hospital saw significant reductions in ventilator-acquired pneumonia and surgical site infections. We also were one of only a handful of institutions that voluntarily reported to the Leapfrog Group (leapfroggroup.org), demonstrating our high quality and safety levels.

What’s ahead for 2006? As we strive to achieve and maintain preeminence, we must continue to “raise the bar.” To further improve on what is already an excellent clinical and operational enterprise is going to require increased levels of both focus and speed. We must learn how to accomplish in weeks what we would formerly have spent months in meetings discussing. To accelerate our progress, Clarian is adopting a well-known technique known as the Model for Improvement. This model, based on common-sense principles, has facilitated breakthrough improvements in many industries, including hundreds of top-performing hospitals around the world.

On behalf of the senior leadership at Clarian, thank you so much for the great work you did in 2005. We look forward to continuing our journey in 2006!