

Letter to the EPCMS members

Rodolfo Fierro-Stevens, M.D.



LETTERS TO THE
EPCMS

E . P . C . M . S .

Dear Colleagues:

Something incredible happens when you train at a Children's Hospital. You get accustomed to what pediatric subspecialty care should be like. The promise of such a hospital is what brought me to El Paso 11 years ago, despite the fact that there were 3 additional pediatric neurologists in private practice. Such is the drawing power of a Children's Hospital.

Unfortunately, now I am the only pediatric neurologist in private practice and although I am lucky in having two great colleagues at Texas Tech's Medical Center (Dr. Joe Levine and Dr. Fares Kokash), I remain the one that is covering the private hospitals for almost all consults.

This constant 24/7 coverage for the past years pressured me to consider my options. Firstly, the status quo, just care for my patients for an additional 25 years, make my money and then retire. This implies losing my vision of what El Paso should have, showing complacency and hoping that other people or entities take the initiative. The second, associated with more effort, required an active participation in the process of making this a better city to live in and accompanying other well intentioned citizens in providing El Paso with our shared vision of where pediatric care should be.

As you may already know, I chose the letter.

Several negative factors made this decision much easier. The stagnation in recruitment ability for pediatric subspecialties, the fragmentation of pediatric subspecialty care forcing me to visit several hospitals on a daily basis, thereby decreasing my direct patient contact time, the lack of initiative by the private hospital chains to individually or as a joint effort affect these matters and the disingenuous naming as a Children's Hospital of a community hospital's pediatric ward.

In addition, several positive factors influenced me greatly. The universal agreement by private and academic subspecialties alike about our need for a real Children's Hospital, the amazing fact that El Paso will have the first 4-year medical school in the U.S. in the last 25 years, the spearheading effort by

Dr. Carlos Gutierrez, my fellow subspecialists, Mr. Jim Valenti, Mrs. Dennece Knight and the Hospital District Board of Managers to make this come to fruition, and the support of my wife and kids in pursuing my vision.

Many individuals, groups and associations were conscientious enough to look at both sides of this issue and I am extremely grateful for their unconditional letters of support. I am disappointed that my County Medical Society was unable to provide us with such a letter despite seeing that the majority of private pediatricians and all of the pediatric subspecialists were board.

Now that the funds for this project have been secured, a brief moment of excitement has been immediately followed by a sense of responsibility for the trust placed on us by the citizens of our county. We need to make this project successful. I truly hope that our County Medical Society can help us achieve this. The interests of our Medical Society and our pediatric population should NEVER take a backseat to corporate influence.

Thank you.

Rodolfo Fierro-Stevens, M.D. is a Child Neurologist in private practice, El Paso, Texas.