

My Turn

Perspective from the other side

Dr. Larry Schreiber

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I usually stay out of administrative medicine and I plan to continue that trend.

Having been a physician in Taos County for 39 years, I have seen major changes mostly for the better. Of the active oldtime physicians still practicing, Dr. Steve Cetrulo, Dr. Ellen Warren, Dr. Mike Kaufman, and myself, we could tell stories that would make us all laugh and cry simultaneously.

When we first came to Taos, there were no ER Doctors and no hospitalists. We did everything. Now as a community doc with little to do with the hospital I didn't think I had the intimacy with all the details to comment on all the recent changes. The changes have had me frightened for my family and all my longtime patients as they entered the final stages of their lives.

I don't know the specifics, do not have an MBA, or can comment on the changes, but the loss of fine staff and really competent docs on the hospitalist service and the reduction of ICU beds were a step back to the bad old days.

So when the doctor becomes the patient as I did with a serious blood infection and had to be hospitalized quite suddenly, it gave me a peek into the quality of our hospital services. Fortunately, Holy Cross Hospital has survived and prospered despite the prior administrator.

What you need when you become seriously ill are good doctors, a staff of qualified nurses, and good luck.

Well, I won't mention all, but the long and short of it is, we still have a quality hospital in Taos that delivers first rate personal care.

First, I had the best doctor in town, (my son Dr. Lucas Schreiber), and I do get an advantage there, but he knew what to do medically and was ready with me barking obnoxious orders in his ears to fight for the right care in case the staff doctors didn't know what they were doing.

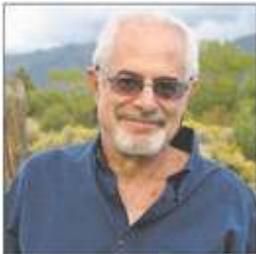
But my experience with all the docs and nurse practitioners was positive with the ones I knew and the newbies who were professional and smart. It was comforting to have Dr. Jill Ismail in charge and she did not falter in her competence, smartness, compassion, and excellence as a hospitalist-intensivist.

Then I met the newbies (what were they doing in my hospital and how much did I have to watch them, I thought), but they all surprised me with their competence and compassion — from the balding nice ER doc, Jim Stone who even asked about Ebola exposure when he'd heard I'd recently returned from Italy, to the quirky and knowledgeable nurse practitioner, Ida Dunn. The ER nurses and in-patient nurses and aids displayed their usual top notch excellence.

Now there are still changes that upset me; the administration continues to spend too much money on advertising that could go directly into patient care. If you provide good care, which we do, then you don't need a huge advertising budget.

I can now reiterate to my patients in an unabashed way that we still have a first rate community hospital that has survived mismanagement and is fully prepared to meet our families' elective and urgent medical needs. I know the only advertisement that works for me is — Holy Cross Hospital — they're still here for us.

Larry Schreiber, MD has been a staff member at Holy Cross Hospital since 1976 and is a partner at Family Practice Associates. He also has served for the last 20 years as medical director of Mountain Home Health Hospice.



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