

December 19, 2014

"It gets late early out there"

Yogi Berra

Hi Everyone,

This is a special Departmental Acknowledgement. The last one for 2014, coming just before the holidays. It's fitting that it goes to **Jose Montes** of Neurosurgery who is someone I have seen doing a mighty fine Santa Claus impersonation on multiple occasions over the years.

Jose started at the MCH in 1976 and has remained here ever since. Sadly, he will be leaving the MCH in the first part of next year to return to his native Mexico where his beloved wife and child awaits him after a needless bureaucratic separation. He can now have some semblance of the 'normal' family life that many of us take for granted. In Mexico, he will continue his professional life as a neurosurgeon and the children and families of Mexico will be blessed for this.

As a neurologist, I am privileged to work closely with neurosurgeons. I often say that I am too in awe of the brain to consider operating on it (actually it's because I am not at all a morning person and my brother Larry [a retired businessman] carves a roast beef better than me). However neurosurgeons bravely overcome this awe to enter the space created by the skull and spinal column to do amazing things that were the stuff of science fiction but a few years ago. They say "you are never the same once the air has hit your brain", yet neurosurgeons are masters of minimizing new disruptions and deficits in an organ whose complexity will never be completely captured by human understanding.

Jose is everything you would want in a neurosurgeon. He is a superb operative technician: patient, meticulous, diligent and never looking for a shortcut. He seeks input and counsel from other members of the team including neurologists, neurophysiologists, imagers, nurses and rehab specialists, treating everyone with respect and kindness. He always manages to synthesize the often disparate information into a seamless whole that conclusively points to path forward that makes sense. Like all great surgeons, he knows when to operate, but more importantly he knows when not to. His career has coincided with a remarkable trajectory of technological improvements (ie pneumoencephalograms to a 3T intra-operative MRI scan) with which he has kept up with, continually refining his operative modus operandi. Quite simply, Jose has never stopped learning.

In addition, he has been a remarkable teacher and mentor. Numerous pediatric neurosurgeons and adult neurosurgeons have learned their craft under his tutelage including the three (Jeff Atkinson, Roy Dudley and Jean-Pierre Farmer) who will continue his legacy at the MCH-MUHC. Jose has even found the time to be an Osler Fellow to medical students in the class of 2014.

However, where Jose has always shined the brightest is his rapport with children and families. His patience, warmth, compassion and tenderness for those that have come under his care have always been on display. He is a model for physicianship and professionalism in the most trying and stressful of moments. He is an example for us all. While not a Spanish, English or French word, there is one that I am sure Jose knows by now and so aptly captures what I think of him. Quite simply, he is a mensch.

Please join me in wishing Jose all the best as he transitions into the next phase of his professional and personal life. Take the time to say goodbye to him. He is someone we will miss. I know I will.

As mentioned at the beginning, this is the final Departmental Acknowledgement for the year. We will resume on January 16th.

Happy Holidays to all! May the New Year be one of joy, peace, health and tranquility for you and all those you care about.

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