



Response to Dallas Morning News Articles

Aug. 2, 2010

To the UT Southwestern Campus Community:

After months of inquiries and multiple requests for information, over the past two days the *Dallas Morning News* has published prominent stories that portray UT Southwestern and our primary teaching hospital, Parkland Memorial Hospital, in an inaccurate and unfair light. These stories were instigated by a current litigant against UT Southwestern and a small group of former UT Southwestern physicians with allegiance to him. They raise several key issues I want to address with you directly.

We obviously have been aware for some time that the paper was working on these stories, and over the past several weeks, we provided the reporters with extensive information. It was clear from their questions that their understanding of the integration of medical education, patient care, and resident physician training was far from complete. Our goal was to give them important context and other material to better inform their reporting and demonstrate that the claims being made against us were misleading.

It was disappointing to see so little of our information included in the paper's stories, which mischaracterized both the system for training and supervising resident physicians and the standard of clinical care patients receive at Parkland Memorial Hospital and UT Southwestern University Hospitals.

We can't control what the *Dallas Morning News* publishes, but we can state, clearly and unequivocally, that UT Southwestern places the highest priority on patient safety. We care deeply about any patients who experience complications while under our care. Our physicians work tirelessly to prevent errors that could compromise care and are continually building on experience to enhance safety and ensure quality outcomes for all patients.

We are also understandably proud of our residency training programs and our record of nearly 70 years of preparing physicians. As many of you know, half of the doctors providing patient care in North Texas have completed all or part of their training at UT Southwestern. We are committed to resident physician supervision that meets or exceeds the most rigorous standards of physician training, as confirmed by the exceptional scores we have received from all recognized accrediting organizations.

Given that it was a particular focus of these stories, I want to emphasize the outstanding achievements of the UT Southwestern surgery residency program and its director, James Valentine, M.D. As a nationally recognized surgeon and educator, Dr. Valentine has dedicated his career to providing care to the patients of Parkland, and we are indeed fortunate to have him as a member of our faculty.

I also want to emphasize that while there are differences among our hospitals, our physicians embrace only one standard of care in treating patients: excellence. Our overriding goal is to provide each and every patient with exceptional care, and UT Southwestern's physicians have made it their life's work to achieve this standard, regardless of where patients are treated or their socio-economic circumstances.

Our affiliation with Parkland Memorial Hospital is also a source of enormous pride for us. Parkland is without question one of the leading public hospitals and Level 1 trauma centers in the nation. It is a privilege for us to work with the hospital on our joint mission to serve the needs of Parkland's patients and to provide superior training for resident physicians.

I am not going to address every one of our issues with the stories published by the *Dallas Morning News* here, so I encourage you to read our full responses to the questions we received from the paper — and then judge for yourselves whether the articles accurately represented the way we care for patients and how we train resident physicians.

Finally, I know from my own experiences as an attending physician at both Parkland Memorial Hospital and University Hospital-St. Paul the extraordinary dedication of UT Southwestern faculty and resident physicians who deliver care at Parkland and the UT Southwestern hospitals.

When I came to Dallas from Boston two years ago this month, I was of course drawn by UT Southwestern's reputation and its potential for even greater achievements as an academic medical center. But I was also significantly influenced by the history and level of community support for the institution, which I had not known about previously and found enormously compelling. I have been heartened by the belief that this support remains strong. In fact, based on the community responses I have received, the *Dallas Morning News* articles run so contrary to actual experiences with UT Southwestern and Parkland that I sense an even greater intensity of support.

UT Southwestern and Parkland Memorial Hospital are vital parts of the Dallas community — and critical components of the healthcare system serving North Texas and a multi-state region. I want you to know how proud I am of the incredible commitment from everyone at both institutions. Whatever role you play, your work is helping us change lives, and I thank you for the contributions that I am confident people across this region understand and appreciate.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center