

# PEDIATRIC CORNER

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## Small town medicine: Rejecting the next-gen approach.

Winter 1970. Two o'clock in the morning. My little brother Chris starts wheezing with asthma. Mom awoke. Grabbed him out of bed and ran to the bathroom. Immediately, mom turned on steamy hot water in the shower and sink, while leaning him over the steam with a towel over his head. As a single mom with five boys, all about a year apart, my exhausted mother cried. Then, she called Dr. Lathrop. He was our pediatrician, and the "solo" practitioner in town. He knew our whole family, and had treated Chris as a "sick" patient before.

We were some of his first patients when he graduated from medical school. Back then your pediatrician played an important family role, like a close relative. As our trusted healer, he was always invited to family events. Got gifts at Christmas and, before we knew it was actually at our house checking on Chris.

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**I think of him often, as Dr. Lathrop is probably the chief reason I pursued pediatric medicine. Although, he never worked for a university hospital, by example, he was my first teacher of what a doctor should do. And, the best role model I could ever learn from.**

As next-gen doctors landscaped our future, the "Dr. Lathrop's" almost became a nostalgic memory. With dozens of mega-group doctors, and, part-time physicians now the norm, I wondered how any part-timer or on-caller might have treated us. We were lucky. Unlike today, we always saw our doctor and the doctor-patient relationship was trusted and strong.

Patient rewards of the "solo" practitioner are obvious. What's not, are the rewards to the doctor. Today's medicine is about relationships. You can't form a relationship with someone you don't spend time with. Time is not only for the moment, but accrues over the months and years. I hope to see many of my patients marry and bring their children to our practice.

Rejecting the next-gen approach, I decided to walk in the old school shoes of the Dr. Lathrop's who have served before me. As a hometown pediatrician who will see patients at church, school, or even at the grocery store we're proud to bring small town medicine back to historic down town Canton. Just like the friendly curve along East Main Street. I wonder if that might be the place where an "old-fashioned" doctor could restore and relocate his pediatric practice. I wonder.

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