

Thursday, June 21, 2018

Message From Mitch

Health Impact to Immigrant Children Being Separated from Their Families

Over the last few days, I have received messages from distraught physicians, social workers, and other health care providers in our health system who are understandably horrified by the unjust treatment of immigrants across our county. They are seeing first-hand the serious health impact to children of immigrants who have been torn apart from their families—and not at our border, but here in New York.

After separation, some of these children have ended up in our Emergency Departments accompanied by their government-appointed guardians who are often unfamiliar with the children, have no access to medical records, and have no way of getting in touch with a family member to get a medical history.

We have seen children as young as five and have treated teenagers who have presented with signs of anxiety, trauma, and stress-related illness, including one extreme case of a teen with suicidal ideations after being separated from his mother.

We know the health risks associated with tearing apart children from their families are very real including an increased risk of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and attention-deficit disorder. And the demand on health care professionals in NYC and across our country will undoubtedly continue to grow.

That's why I wanted to take this moment to again thank the amazing workforce at NYC Health Hospitals for your continued commitment to providing compassionate, humane, and high-quality care to all. These challenging times help to underscore the essential role you play by bringing to life our mission to care for all without exception.

One of our physicians from the Bronx said, "Our clinicians feel despondent and helpless in the face of such cruelty. We can only help to comfort these children and show them that kindness does exist."

So let's keep showing them kindness and respect. Let's keep giving them the health care they need and deserve. And let's keep making it clear to the world that at NYC Health + Hospitals, immigrants can seek care without fear, and that the health care professionals in our health system stand against any actions that bring unnecessary harm to our immigrant community.

Mitch

Dr. Mitchell Katz
President and CEO
NYC Health + Hospitals