Doctors Within Borders: Providing Medical Care to Immigrant Children

Carlos Gutierrez, MD, FAAP
El Paso del Norte Pediatrics

Bert E Johansson, MD, PhD, FAAP
Salud de Familia La Fe
El Paso Children’s Hospital
Objectives

- Review pertinent background regarding care of immigrant children released in El Paso, including changing demographics, the impact of diverse legal statuses on the provision of healthcare, and the current refugee resettlement program.
Gracias mi Hermanas y Hermanos!!!

Dr Blanca Garcia, MD
Fr Rafael Garcia, S.J.

Dr Lisa Ayuob-Rodriguez, MD
Ruben Garcia
The Political Backdrop:

- President Trump enacted policies designed to discourage all types of entry to the United States. Including building a wall along the entire U.S.-Mexico border.

- Yet, people continue to flee Central American countries — especially El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras — because of widespread corruption and violence. Powerful criminal organizations and street gangs make daily life dangerous in those countries, particularly for young people, according to Human Rights Watch.

- The journey that can take several weeks. Most are poor, they often travel without enough food, water, clothing, or medicine. And many of them are children.
The Changing Face of Southwest Border Apprehensions
U.S. Border Patrol apprehensions of illegal aliens at the Southwest border, by country of origin

Unaccompanied child migrants

Country of origin
- Mexico
- Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador

Number of apprehensions

Source: US Customs and Border Protection

Fiscal years – October 1 to September 30
Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection
The Events: ICE Releases Asylum Seekers

• On 26 October 2018, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) abruptly left more than 200 asylum seekers at the El Paso Greyhound station.
• The refugees had been in an ICE detention center while being processed but were released for space concerns.
• Most did not speak English, many did not speak Spanish.
• None had anywhere to go in El Paso. Several needed medical attention.

“As we were walking, I was fighting just to not break down crying.”
Ruben Garcia
Director, Annunciation House
Over the next 16 weeks:

- 200 to 400 Asylum Seekers/day were released from ICE custody.
- Without money, without telephones, many without medicines.
- El Paso/Las Cruces responded!! 17 "Hospitality Centers" opened.
- Not a single migrant was left on the street!!
Who We Cared For:

No systemic data on ER or Hospital Admissions Collected

No Deaths

2 y/o sepsis

4 DKAs

3 bacterial pneumonias

1 intubated for seizures

1 16 y/o AML

4 dehydrations

1 Mumps

3 Varicella