

A Pediatrician to Keep

The day finally came…we were moving. It was bad enough leaving my best friends, my mother, my sweet house, but my pediatrician too? It was all that I could bear. “Okay,” I thought, “I’ll find another pediatrician like Dr. King. There have to be more pediatricians out there like Dr. King”.trician to keep.

I’ve been away since May, 2003 and it’s now January, 2004. I am currently with a practice of 4 doctors; none have ever asked how we are doing. Our own doctor barely knows the children’s names. We see a nurse practitioner at every visit; she weighs the children, takes temperatures and gives the shots when necessary. Never do I speak with my doctor when I call. I am referred to a nurse on call. It’s frustrating to feel that my pediatrician really doesn’t know the children at all.

Don’t get me wrong, my children are given antibiotics when necessary and receive their monthly and yearly shots, but something important is missing: a doctor/patient relationship. Are my expectations too high? I don’t think so; my children’s teachers at school give me regular feedback on the kids and progress that they are making. Are pediatricians so busy and overbooked that patients are just numbers on their daily schedule?

No nurses, no interns, but Dr. King handled it all. He administered the shots, took their weights and heights. He would see the children immediately if there was any question whatsoever as to their general good health. He would often call to check-in with us after an ear infection or high fever. He would ask our children about what was going on their young

lives and,
in answering his questions, it was clear that they
respected
Dr. King. He even answered the phone personally when
you called
his practice.

I remember walking into Dr. King's office a long
time
ago and he asked me, "How are you doing? Any
stresses?"
I think I crumbled. My baby wasn't sleeping at all,
my almost 3 year old wanted nothing to do with potty
training
and my husband and I were mainly roommates crossing
paths
every once in a while. My pediatrician asked my
husband and
me to come back one evening so we could talk. He
asked questions
and listened to us talk, and throughout our
discussion my
husband and I came up with our own conclusions on
what changes
needed to be made — changes that were necessary for
the general well-being of the entire family.

What I know now, that I didn't even think about
before,
was that Dr. King was making sure the family unit
was stable
and strong. If that unit remained so, the children
whom he
cared for would be in better hands and health for
that matter.

Sometimes, we parents aren't looking for a magic
"cure"
to fix the problem but, rather, an empathetic ear to
listen
to the daily challenges of life's hardest job:
parenting.
Let's face it, there isn't a cure for temper
tantrums,
whining, and back talk. These are brutal and we all
know it.
When I walk into my pediatrician's office, I
sometimes
need to vent the frustrations that I am feeling at
that particular
stage with my child. I don't want to be rushed in
and
out and I often don't need to be prescribed any
antibiotic
for the problem.

So, it is how my pediatrician listens, and the medical care he provides for my child on a given day, that generates such trust. Is your pediatrician accessible? Is your pediatrician trying to understand the dynamics of your healthy family? Does your pediatrician offer reasonable medical advice and solutions? Does your pediatrician prioritize your medical needs in a way that allows you to believe that you could be his only patients?

When you answer "yes" to these kinds of questions, you have a pedia