



Fourteen-month-old David Zurovec lends Dr. David Ruiz a hand with his heart check during a routine visit.

Photos by Dane Anderson



Dr. Elena Ruiz (left) shares a few grins with four month-old Hayden Battles brought in for a tummy upset by mom Amber Battles.

Is there a doctor in the house?

Father-and-daughter team of pediatricians bring family to practice

By Dane Anderson
Staff Writer

It is Friday afternoon at the Bee Cave Pediatrics clinic, and the place is hopping with tiny clients and their parents. New-born babies peek out from deep within blankets in their mothers' arms. A six-foot-plus teen sheepishly rubs the site of his very recent flu shot. Nurses calmly appear and disappear, and children of all ages play in a make-believe cave in the corner of the room.

At the heart of the bustling medical practice is a father-and-daughter pediatric team, Drs. David and Elena Ruiz.

David, a physician for more than 30 years, founded Bee Cave Pediatrics in 1991 with friend and fellow pediatrician Jerome Hudson. Daughter, Elena, joined her dad on staff six months ago.

David gets a little misty-eyed when asked how it feels having his daughter working by his side.

"It is my number one pride," he said, beaming. "Having two children who have become successful people. My daughter Teresa is an attorney. Having Elena follow in my footsteps, it is a great happiness."

People who spend time at Bee Cave Pediatrics get more

than quality medical care. They get a free lesson in old world family values and little insight into how kindness and caring about other people just might change the world around us.

David Ruiz grew up in Toledo, Spain, a twin son of a prominent physician. He got his medical degree from the University of Madrid in 1976, and he performed his residency at the University of Medicine in Barcelona. His twin brother, Moses, is also a pediatrician, practicing in Talavera de la Reyna near his hometown of Toledo.

"I wanted to become a pediatrician because I love working with children," said David. "They don't lie. They tell you everything. They are so transparent, they show everything in their faces. You deal with sweet babies and sweet mothers."

At a point when most new doctors think about opening their own practices, David wanted to learn more. To do that, he traveled to the States and joined the Children's Memorial Hospital in Oklahoma City for another round of pediatric residency. It was in Oklahoma City that David met Hudson, and the two became friends.

"We were both on call one night together, and we saved a diabetic patient," said Hudson. "We got to be friends talking to-

gether at night. We've been buddies ever since."

Hudson, who grew up in nearby San Antonio, brought David to Austin to try and convince him to move to the sleepy Texas college town in 1979. He took him to Barton Springs, 6th Street, the Oasis and a few other local favorites.

"He showed me Mt. Bonnell, and I thought, this could be the place. At least for a year or two," said David, laughing.

David went back to Austin and packed up everything he owned, along with his wife Teresa and his two young daughters. He drove a U-Haul truck while Teresa drove a Volkswagen all the way to Austin, where David joined the pediatric teaching program at Brackenridge Hospital.

"One year turned into two that turned into three that turned into 30," said David, thinking back on his unexpectedly long tenure in the capital city.

Elena was born in Toledo, just like her father. Once landing in Austin with her family, she became a true product of the Westbank and the Eanes school district. She attended Valley View Elementary School, Hill Country Middle School and Westlake High School. She initially entered the University of Texas at Austin Business School.

"My dad veered me away a

little from medicine," said Elena, grinning at her father. "He remembered the long hours and the difficult work. I think he wanted me to have an easier lifestyle."

But, like her father, grandfather and uncle, being a doctor was in Elena's blood. She was lured away from accounting and marketing classes by her fascination with the science classes she was taking.

"I found I really excelled at science, and I really loved it," she said. "It opened my eyes to what I should be doing."

After receiving her medical degree from the University of Texas Medical School in Houston in 2001, Elena moved to New York City for two years of pediatric residency at the New York University School of Medicine.

"She headed to New York with a degree and two children," noted David.

Elena's husband, Dr. Lee Moroz, is also a local physician, specializing in physical medicine and rehabilitation.

After finishing her residency, Elena did a stint as an attending clinical assistant at Bellevue Hospital in New York before heading home to be closer to

family and friends.

She takes over some of her father's female adolescent patients as they enter the age where giving health details to a female physician is a little less embarrassing than giving them to their old pal Dr. David Ruiz.

"She is stealing all my patients," David said, jesting ruefully.

The two doctors seem to find old-fashioned comfort practicing together.

"When I see new patients, they always tell me, 'I love your dad, I love your dad,'" said Elena. "I hope to have that some day."

Watching the father-daughter team make the patient rounds in their office brings a smile to the faces of many of the patients who have known David from his beginnings in the Westbank 15 years ago.

"There is something special to this life we have," said David, trying to find the right words. "You have your own patients. You see them when they're born. You see them as toddlers and adolescents. You see them with their own children. That is what makes this all something very unique."