

James L. Holly, M.D.

SETMA and the Future of Primary Care: Note from Dr. Vardiman

March 27, 2012

To: SETMA Staff

Re: Credit for SETMA's Success

Dr. John Vardiman, a 77- year-old colleague at SETMA, sent me a handwritten note with an article from the *Wall Street Journal*. His hand written note stated: “*Larry --- (i.e., Capt'n Larry) After reading this, I have (once again) a new appreciation for your 'brilliant command' of our ship through troubled waters --- John V. (Fri 3-16-12).*” While I appreciate Dr. Vardiman's kind remarks and while I have participated in SETMA's development and success, there are MANY others who have taken the risks, paid the price, held on to the dream and been instrumental in sustaining SETMA along the our seventeen-year path. Dr. Vardiman's note and this article remind me of May 20, 1996, not yet one year after the founding of SETMA on August 1, 1995. We were already experiencing significant success. I wrote to all of SETMA's staff at 3 AM that morning:

“This morning, as I was awakened at 3:00 AM while on call, I laid in bed thinking about our business – yours and mine – and thinking about why we have achieved what we have. As I prayed and thanked God for His blessing, I meditated upon Deuteronomy 8. I realized that the prosperity which SETMA, LLP has experienced is not an occasion for pride, but for humility. That humility is borne of the reality that **many people have contributed to the growth and success of SETMA, LLP. Without each one of them -- many employees of the corporation, many consultants to the corporation, others simply friends who have wished us well, and others who have diligently prayed for God's blessings upon this business – SETMA, LLP would not be what it is. I humbly and gratefully acknowledge the contribution of each one of you to this success.**” (emphasis added)

This note was sent as a “personal note” as it is written from the perspective of my personal belief system and faith. SETMA is a multi-specialty, multi-faith, multi-national, and multi-ethnic practice in its patient base and employee- and healthcare-provider base. We respect the person and the faith of each of our friends and colleagues without asking anyone to minimize their belief system. I continued in that 1996 note discussing SETMA's decision making principles:

“Southeast Texas Medical Associates, LLP maintains three standards of measuring any decision, all three must be met before we undertake any action. First, we ask the question, ‘Is it legal?’ – this involves ethics. If an action is not legal, we need go no further in our evaluation; we will not do it. But, even if an action is legal, we are not yet at the point of decision; we move to the second step of our evaluation, which applies a higher standard. We ask the question, ‘Is it right?’ – this involves equity, i.e., is it fair to all parties. However, even if a decision is right, this does not get us to a final decision. Before we decide anything, we go one step further and ask the question, ‘Is it righteous,’ – this involves eternity. If it is not righteous, no matter how legal and right an action may be, Christians should not be involved in it. If an action is not ethical, equitable and eternally acceptable, we do not enter into any business agreement. Thus far, God has blessed our practice beyond our comprehension.”

As I read of Dr. Scott Hammond’s struggles and as I remember May, 1997, when I was confident that SETMA would go bankrupt, I receive Dr. Vardiman’s recognition with thanksgiving for all of you who have participated in SETMA’s success. We are on a remarkable journey and in my judgment the credit for that journey’s success belongs to each and all of you and to the Providence of God. Whatever the future holds, we face it with confidence and with certainty as the principles, participants and providence, which have brought us this far, will sustains us in the future.

And, one of the great pleasures to which we have to look forward is being able to help prepare a new generation of healthcare providers -- nurses, physician assistance, nurse practitioners and physicians -- to share SETMA’s principles, passion, and purpose.