

James L. Holly, M.D.

My Valedictory Address and the Announcement of my Retirement

By James L. Holly, MD

Your Life Your Health

The Examiner

September 13, 2018

For twenty-one years -- September 11, 1997 to September 13, 2018 -- in columns entitled “Thoughts About Things” and “Your Life Your Health,” the owner, editor and publisher of *The Examiner* have allowed me to write a weekly column in their paper. I am grateful for that and in the last of these articles, wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to them for this privilege.

It is inevitable that all things come to an end and as I announce my retirement from Southeast Texas Medical Associates, LLP, I present my final column for *The Examiner*. In these twenty-one years, this column has discussed exciting innovations in healthcare, announced transformative initiatives in the delivery of that care, discussed public health issues and policies and examined many health issues. All columns are catalogued at www.jameslhollymd.com (soon to be changed to www.jhollymd.com).

As time goes by, the information in these columns will become dated, but they will always reflect the foundation and the history of Southeast Texas Medical Associates, LLP (SETMA), which can name among other honors being named as “one of thirty exemplar practices in the United States by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation”.

Thank each one of you who has read this column and who have encouraged SETMA through these years.

Retirement Announcement

It is with sadness and regret that I announce my retirement from Southeast Texas Medical Associates, LLP and from the practice of medicine in Southeast Texas, effective December 31, 2018.

November 4, 2018, I turn 75 years-of-age. When asked I have always assured others that I intend to work until I was eighty. That was my intent, but circumstances prevent that from happening. Over the past three years, SETMA has experienced economic pressures caused by Health and Human Services’ (HHS) CMS’s reduction over the past seven years of the reimbursement for Medicare Advantage by twenty-eight percent, aggravated by the Affordable

Care Act tax on the funds paid to the HMO, which tax cost the IPA in which SETMA participates, \$1,700,000 annually.

With my years in solo practice in Beaumont, I have practiced in this community for 43 years. These have been wonderful years for me and for my family.

A principle of organizational life is that when change is made, the most constructive thing old leadership can do is to step aside and wish the new leaders the best. This I do. SETMA is well prepared to proceed into the future, true to its values and aware of the challenges which need to be faced.

I am proud of SETMA. I am proud of the decisions we made and how we have conducted our practice. SETMA has done things which no one has ever done and the things we have done which others are now doing, we did before almost anyone. We have also cared for the most vulnerable and needy people in our community. I am proud of that. The partners of SETMA even funded a Foundation which helps provide care for patients.

As I write these words my mind races across the past forty-three years. Mental images appear of thousands of individuals whom I have cared for, worked with, or known. I wish I could begin naming them, some living, some long since gone, but all cherished in memory. HIPPA and the inevitability of omitting important people makes it impossible to name names.

These years have been rich and rewarding. There are many things which I know I could or should have done better, but where I failed it was never for want of trying. I am comforted and challenged by the words of President Theodore Roosevelt who said:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually try to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.” Theodore Roosevelt, "Citizens in a Republic," the Sorbonne, Paris, France, April 23, 1910, quoted in *The Man in the Arena*, ed. John Allen Gable (Oyster Books, N.Y., Theodore Roosevelt Association, 1987), p. 54)

There is not a community in which I would rather have spent my career than in Beaumont, Texas and the Golden Triangle. As a young man and wife with two young children, two dogs and a cat, my family arrived in Beaumont in 1975. And, now forty-three years later, at the end of a long career, we do not think of “moving” to a retirement center but we look forward to spend all of our coming years doing what we have always done in a different venue but in Beaumont. We look forward to the adventure of realizing who we are in a new arena. And when our time is done, our resting place will be in Beaumont, Texas.

Due to the circumstances of my retirement, I will not have the option of practicing medicine in Southeast Texas, at least not for the next five years, but I can continue to perform my most important roles which are to practice my faith in Jesus Christ, to perform my vows to my wife of fifty-three years, Carolyn Ann Bellue Holly, to love my children and grandchildren and to reintroduce myself to the health and wellness center. I do not fear for my well-being there, but I am anxious for the Center's staff's emotional stability when I appear.

As I try to put this announcement in context, I recall that in 2008, Carolyn and I were in England when we lost an extremely valuable object. The manager of the Connaught asked, "Dr. Holly, you don't seem to be very upset about this?" I responded, "Oh, I am disappointed but that object can be replaced, or it can be lived without; if I had lost my wife that would be something to be devastated over."

And, so it is now, as I make this transition, it is disappointing to me and I suspect it will be to others that I am retiring, yet to be "fair and balanced," there may be some who sigh and think, "I'm glad that's over." But, the reality is that what is fundamentally and ultimately important in my life is not changing. As a result, while my heart is heavy, my face is smiling and my mind rushes about imagining the future.

The reality is also that the name SETMA will continue, the management will not change significantly, the care available will continue to improve and it will still be a very good place to work and to perform the act of "health caring" for others. Change is always stressful, but if we take a deep breath and believe in who we are, "this too shall pass."

The closest biblical reference to such an affirmation is II Corinthians 4:17-18 which states: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

It is my hope and expectation that all of the staff and professionals in SETMA will remain and will be committed to the same values and standards which have been our credo for the past twenty-three years, all will find a new iteration of who and what they are in this great community and practice.

And so, I bid you adieu which in its origin meant "to God." It is not good-bye as each of you will always be a part of our lives and hopefully we of yours. We will be as close as our prayers, our memories and our hopes and dreams. God bless each one of you.

James L. Holly, M.D.
CEO, SETMA