

CHIEF OF CARDIOLOGY

Daniel J. Penny, M.D., Ph.D., M.H.A.

Department of Pediatrics

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Hugh D. Allen, M.D.

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9/1/2024

To the Mayors Hispanic Heritage Awards Nominating Committee-

I am writing this letter in the strongest support of Dr. Andrea Cruz for the Hispanic Heritage Healthcare Award. This physician has significantly impacted the lives of families in Houston, the US, and frankly throughout the world due to her clinical care as well as research in TWO pediatric medical specialties, specifically in work surrounding traumatic brain injury, mental health, tuberculosis (TB) and severe bacterial (sepsis) infections. She has given several international, national, and local educational sessions on these (and other) topics.

Dr. Cruz is tenured Professor in the Department of Pediatrics, in the section of BOTH Infectious Diseases AND Emergency Medicine at Texas Children's Hospital/Baylor College of Medicine. She has worked domestically and internationally to improve the care of children with TB for over 20 years, has been the director of the pediatric TB clinic at Texas Children's Hospital since 2012. She has delivered 28 international talks on the care of pediatric TB and other infectious diseases on various continents in the last decade, as well as over 130 national and 145 local talks. This level of education at the local, national and international level is not typical or common for a clinically busy pediatric provider, but her expertise is so sought after that she has found a way to make education a significant part of her career. She has participated as a lead in several multisite national studies to improve the care of children in emergency rooms across the US, and CURRENTLY is the recipient of six national grants (she has had 13 OTHER grants in the past). She has authored an impressive 216 medical publications (!), and participated in the writing of over 32 books. Her contributions to the understanding of bacterial infections, TB, traumatic brain injury and mental health is unparalleled in the two fields of infectious disease and emergency medicine. Few people are able to make this degree of an impact in TWO medical fields.

Dr. Cruz has received several awards, including the article of the year in 2024 to teach other physicians how to predict serious bacterial infections among hypothermic infants in the emergency department. She has received an impressive 14 teaching awards by various levels of medical trainees- this is

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not an easy achievement at such a large pediatric institution as Texas Children's Hospital! She has served on the editorial board of 2 prominent pediatric and infectious disease journals, and chairs several national medical committees to improve the care of children in emergency room settings and to reduce poor outcomes from severe pediatric infections from birth through adolescence.

In addition to all of her direct medical clinical care, education, and research, over the span of 2 decades she has put her ER skills into action by volunteering to serve Houstonians in numerous ways:

Volunteering in the Houston Marathon Medical tent, 2003-2014

Volunteering in the Astrodome to triage medical needs for children after Katrina, 2005

Volunteering for Children at Risk from 2010-2015

Volunteering at the American Lung Association Fight for Air Stair Climb medical tent, 2011-2020

Volunteering at the Houston Food Bank consistently since 2015

Volunteering for Houston Hospice since 2024

Further, locally in Houston Dr. Cruz has spent significant amounts of time directly educating the Latino population about tuberculosis infection via Univision and Telemundo, and to parents and teachers in local schools regarding protection and treatment from a TB infection. This education is a significant contribution to the Houston community, as Tuberculosis (especially strains that are drug resistant) remain an ongoing, prevalent, and deadly disease in Houston. She has participated in several diversity outreach efforts to encourage the youth in Houston to apply to and enter the medical field, and has served as a mentor for the Latino Medical Student Association.

In summary, Dr. Cruz has made significant contributions to not only the health of children in Houston, but also to improving the health of children nationally and internationally in TWO medical fields: pediatric emergency medicine and pediatric infectious disease. She has significantly contributed to the education, research, care delivery, health awareness and research dissemination of tuberculosis treatment and mitigation strategies from the

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local to international levels. Her local contribution to education and serving children in Houston CANNOT be underestimated, and has been particularly impactful for the Latino community, particularly for the dissemination of information to Latino population for TB care. Her resumes speak for itself, and I give her my highest recommendation for this award.

Please feel free to reach out with any further questions.

Sincerely,



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