It is with great humility that I begin my work with the Santa Fe County Fire Department. I officially began my tenure on January 1st. Since then, I have had the privilege of meeting and working with Chief Holden, Deputy Chief Sperling, Asst. Chief Holland and Captain Mestas.

This past week, I was fortunate to have been present at the graduation of newly minted Paramedics (James Smith for SF County) who completed their training at the Santa Fe Community College Emergency Medical Services Institute. Their graduation marked the beginning of a career built upon a process of continual learning and improvement.

My interest in Emergency Medical services can be traced to an incident that occurred in 1984. I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in West Africa and a young woman had fallen down a well, breaking her leg. We arranged transport from her village to the nearest clinic, which was 15 miles away. Her mode of transport – a cart pulled by a donkey! When I returned to the US, I began working for International Aid Organizations including the US Agency for International and UNICEF. My work focused on building Disaster Relief and essential health-care infrastructure in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

There are many parallels between West Africa and New Mexico. Communities are mostly rural and patients are often reluctant to seek health care; when they do, their access is often limited to centers far from their homes. There are language barriers (Spanish, local Native American dialects) and cultural barriers that exist; transport times to hospitals are often lengthy.

Fortunately, we no longer rely on donkey-carts to transport the sick. But despite our well-equipped rigs and readily available helicopter services from Careflight and PHI, the backbone of our EMS system is our dedicated EMT providers. As an Emergency Medicine Physician, I can tell you that when lives are saved, it is in pre-hospital setting – way before the gurney rolls into the Emergency Department. For these reasons, having a talented and well-trained cadre of Emergency Medical Providers is essential.

My philosophy is as follows:

1. Focus on training - in the months ahead, in collaboration with the Santa Fe Community College and St. Vincent's Hospital, we hope to initiate a monthly Case Conference where we can review interesting and challenging medical and trauma cases. To this end, I will need your on which cases and topics you

think are essential to maintaining and improving your skills and knowledge base.

2. Focus on quality improvement – we regularly review cases such as medical codes and level-one trauma cases. Was an airway obtained using nasal-tracheal intubation? What are the indications for nasal-tracheal intubation? Contraindications? How much fluid was used for trauma resuscitation? How much should have been used? By reviewing such cases, this gives us an opportunity to provide direct feedback to our EMT's and tailor our future training activities to identified needs. Our goal is not to find fault with the way things were done, but to identify cases that will help us improve.
3. Focus on communication. It is my goal to visit every District in the months to come and to meet as many providers as possible. For units that transport to St. Vincent's, I have fairly regular contact. In the past several weeks, I have begun to solicit feedback on how to improve our system. Some suggestions have been made such as 1. Get Zofran for nausea/vomiting, 2. Provide a refresher airway course, 3. Consider using Ketamine for the rapid tranquilization of agitated trauma patients. My e-mail address is davidscottrosen@mac.com. My cell: 215-880-7131.

I look forward to meeting and working with you all in the months to come.

David Rosen, MD, MPH, MPH, FAAEM
Medical Director
Santa Fe County Fire Department