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Hector Amezcua The Sacramento Bee

Ex-PUC President Michael Peevey was feted in San Francisco on Thursday night.

— Craig Cox, Modesto

Enochs coach should accept defeat

Re "Knights even score with Eagles" (Page C1, Jan. 31): I attend every Beyer basketball game and it is a great joy to watch those boys play. The team has talent and heart. I was very proud to be a Patriot fan the night these boys

number;

■ Should be emailed to letters@modbee.com; addressed to: Letters, The Bee, P.O. Box 5256, Modesto 95352; or faxed to (209) 578-2207. Emails are preferred.

■ Due to the volume of letters, writers are limited to one published letter for 30 days.

Giving anesthesia to kids should be last resort

By LAKSHMI DHANVANTHARI, M.D.

When is it OK to provide general anesthesia for a child receiving medical or dental care?

That is a question I've been asked often as a pediatrician, especially when a particular procedure is time-consuming or involves invasive treatment. General anesthesia may be an appropriate option when benefits outweigh risks, when its effectiveness may improve outcomes and when less invasive options have proven unsuccessful. Each child has to be evaluated each time a procedure is planned or considered.

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American Academy of Pediatrics have issued guidelines for the safe and effective selection and administration of general anesthesia to pediatric pa-

tients. These guidelines were developed because of the risks associated with anesthesia, especially in children with complex medical conditions. These guidelines clearly state that an evaluation of the patient's comprehensive medical history is a critical consideration before proceeding with anesthesia.

Given the risks, general anesthesia should be the last resort – not the first – when attempting treatment and when other options are applicable.

This is a view I've developed from my 15 years of pediatric practice and have carried into my role as chief medical officer for Health Plan of San Joaquin. Recently, I was alarmed to see that our plan receives two to 10 times as many authorization requests for general anesthesia for pediatric dental patients as other similarly sized health plans in California get. Even

taking into consideration an increase in enrollment because of the Affordable Care Act, this is a significant deviation.

You might have read about this issue recently, as HPSJ has been the subject of several stories in The Bee concerning area dental surgery centers' submissions of general anesthesia authorization requests for children.

HPSJ and its team of consulting community dentists and pediatricians require a thorough record of a child's medical history, health concerns and developmental challenges to be provided before they will approve the use of general anesthesia. We have provided our dental surgery center partners with guidelines for authorization, yet continue to receive requests with little or no documentation. This is concerning, since HPSJ assumes the dental clinics must need the

same information to judge whether a request for general anesthesia is medically necessary.

To be clear, HPSJ is authorizing general anesthesia procedures for children in cases where a medical need is documented. But the vast majority of the requests submitted to date fail to substantiate the medical need, and as a result the dental surgery centers are receiving fewer approvals for use of general anesthesia.

We are hopeful that through continued dialogue we can reach an agreement with dental providers that ensures children are receiving appropriate levels of care at the right time, and, importantly, for the right reasons.

Dr. Dhanvanthari is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics and chief medical officer for Health Plan San Joaquin.

on his own without asking anyone's permission.

Now, Obama is looking for a new beginning in the war against the Islamic State. Last week, he asked Congress to approve a resolution formally giving the administration the authority to use military force.

Enraged Americans want the perpetrators punished. Obama offers up moral relativism. In a recent speech at the National Prayer Breakfast, he compared terrorist acts committed in the name of Islam to the Crusades in making the point that evil acts done in the name of religion are nothing new.

Even now, Obama doesn't seem up to the task of making war. The military authorization he seeks is valid for only three years, and it sets the condition that there won't be troops on the ground. Obama says he is not interested in placing the United States on "a perpetual war-time footing" in that part of the world.

"As I've said before, I'm convinced that the United States should not get dragged back into another prolonged ground war in the Middle East," he said in his public remarks about his request to Congress. "That's not in our national security interest and it's not necessary for us to defeat the Islamic State."

But going to war isn't that simple. As a certain king already knows.

*ruben@rubenmavarrette.com
— Washington Post Writers Group*

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