

Wednesday, July 25, 2007

Sachs to help rebuild New Orleans healthcare as Tulane dean

By Carey Goldberg, Globe Staff



Dr. Benjamin Sachs (left), chair of the obstetrics department at **Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center** for the last 18 years, is leaving to become senior vice president of **Tulane University** and dean of its medical school.

He writes in an e-mail:

"Two years ago, the Gulf region was devastated by hurricanes Katrina and Rita and yet people today are still struggling. What attracted me to this position was the opportunity to help rebuild the healthcare system of New Orleans and the Gulf coast. Both a redesigned medical system that provides high quality care for all and a marked growth in world class biomedical research are vital for the region's economic recovery. Tulane is absolutely committed to these goals and to continuing to play a major role in the region's recovery."

A native of London, Sachs came to Boston 29 years ago to complete his residency at **Brigham and Women's Hospital**. He married and raised two sons here. He helped develop new clinical and research programs, and became a national leader on ways to use team-training to improve patient safety.

"I am deeply saddened by the thought of leaving all my friends and colleagues," he writes. "At the same time, I am energized by the idea that I have been asked to help lead a great university, and strive to make a difference in the lives of so many Americans that live on the Gulf coast."

Paul F. Levy, president and CEO of Beth Israel Deaconess, told staff in a memo this morning about Sachs's departure.

"Those of you who know Ben knows that he would not leave us for a "standard" academic appointment at another institution," he wrote. "Here, he is taking on a mission of great humanitarian import."

Sachs will begin his new job in November, Levy wrote. He said that Dr. DeWayne Pursley would step in as interim chair of the obstetrics department, while retaining his current post as chief of neonatology. The hospital will conduct a nationwide search for a replacement for Sachs, he said.

Here is Sachs's e-mail, followed by Levy's memo:

I am writing to let you know that I have accepted a new position as Senior Vice President of Tulane University and Dean of the Medical School. Tulane's medical school was founded in 1834 and has a rich history of many major accomplishments.

Two years ago, the Gulf region was devastated by hurricanes Katrina and Rita and yet people today are still struggling. What attracted me to this position was the opportunity to help rebuild the healthcare system of New Orleans and the Gulf coast. Both a redesigned medical system that provides high quality care for all and a marked growth in world class biomedical research are vital for the region's economic recovery. Tulane is absolutely committed to these goals and to continuing to play a major role in the region's recovery.

Tulane University is the largest employer in the city. Under the extraordinary leadership of President Scott Cowen, Tulane is playing a vital role in the rebuilding process. In just 2 years, Scott has led Tulane through a dramatic recovery and has undertaken a major redesign of the entire university. I believe that as a result of all the changes that Tulane is better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century than most major research universities in the USA.

To give you a flavor of Tulane: at the graduation ceremony this spring the commencement speaker, Brian Williams, asked all the students who had volunteered to help the region to recover from the storm to stand and be recognized. I understand that almost all the students stood up. One of the parents said to me that one could not pay for this kind of education. The university had instilled into the very souls of the students the concept of public service. In fact, Tulane is the only major research university in the country that has public service as an integrated component of the undergraduate experience. In this environment, the faculty can educate the next generation of physicians not only in the science of medicine but also by example, to truly demonstrate humanitarian values

As you know, I was born and raised in London, England and came to Boston 29 years ago to complete my residency at the Brigham and Women's Hospital. Meeting Vickie and the rich intellectual life at Harvard were powerful influences in my decision to stay in Boston. For the past 24 years, my professional home has been at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and for the past 18 years I have been the department chair. We are very fortunate that our hospital is now run by a talented and visionary leader, Paul Levy.

It has been a great privilege to live in Boston. I have had the opportunity to work for Harvard and one of the greatest academic medical centers. These institutions have given me the opportunity to hold many leadership positions, help develop new clinical and research programs in women's health and spearhead nationally, team-training as a new way to improve patient safety. They also gave our department the support needed to develop women's health centers in Philippines, Armenia and Ukraine. Lastly, I have been privileged to have had the opportunity to contribute to the life of our city and the Jewish community.

We are blessed by having raised two wonderful sons in Beantown. Alex has just graduated from Emory with a major in economics and a minor in Arabic and is now pursuing graduate studies in biology. Jonathan is continuing his studies at Boston University having just graduated from Boston University Academy.

I am deeply saddened by the thought of leaving all my friends and colleagues. At the same time, I am energized by the idea that I have been asked to help lead a great university, and strive to make a difference in the lives of so many Americans that live on the Gulf coast.

We will be keeping a home in Boston so please stay in touch and please visit.

Kindest regards,

Ben

From: Levy,Paul (CEO,Beth Israel Deaconess)
Sent: Wednesday, July 25, 2007 10:34 AM
To: BIDMC Community
Subject: Dr. Sachs on the move

Dear BIDMC,

Another transition here at BIDMC. First, Herb Kressel, our chief of radiology, stepped down to become editor of the most respected radiology journal in the country. Then, Jeff Flier accepted an offer to become Dean of our local medical school. Now, Ben Sachs, our distinguished chief of obstetrics and gynecology, has announced that he has accepted an offer to become Senior Vice President of Tulane University and Dean of the Medical School.

Those of you who know Ben knows that he would not leave us for a "standard" academic appointment at another institution. Here, he is taking on a mission of great humanitarian import. As he says in a letter to his friends today:

"Two years ago, the Gulf region was devastated by hurricanes Katrina and Rita and yet people today are still struggling. What attracted me to this position was the opportunity to help rebuild the healthcare system of New Orleans and the Gulf coast. Both a redesigned medical system that provides high quality care for all and a marked growth in world class biomedical research are vital for the region's economic recovery. Tulane is absolutely committed to these goals and playing a major role in the region's recovery. I am energized by the thought that I can help make a difference using the skills and experience I have gained over the last 3 decades."

This assignment is so consistent with Ben's philosophy of life and his prior good deeds throughout the world (e.g., in Ukraine, where he was driving force for improvements in the medical system), that we cannot be surprised. Of course, here at BIDMC, Ben has also been known for running a superb department, with an outstanding record in clinical care, education, and research. He has been an innovator in everything from team training to encouraging young researchers in fields like preeclampsia.

All of us at BIDMC take some pride when one of our senior medical leaders - in this moment Dr. Sachs, and also recently Drs. Flier and Kressel - move on to be of service to a broader audience. We wish Ben well and look forward to receiving his favorite recipes for jambalaya!

Ben takes over his new post in November. Doctor DeWayne Pursley will step in as interim chair, in addition to retaining his post as chief of neonatology, while we conduct a nationwide search for a new chief.

Sincerely,

Paul

Paul F. Levy
President and CEO