

# Modern Healthcare

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**Charles S. Lauer**

## An American dream

*A Cuban emigre finds success in U.S. healthcare*

In 1962 Frank Perez' family fled Castro's Cuba at the age of 18. In order to support his mother and three sisters, he worked as a cabinetmaker in Maryland. A typical immigrant's tale? Perhaps.

Perez did what many had done before, making something of himself and assimilating into our country, but I would argue that he has gone further than many. He has done so fueled by a passion for helping others. He turned that enthusiasm into a career in healthcare administration, becoming one of the most visionary and dedicated chief executives in the industry.

Perez is self-effacing about his many accomplishments, which include running a number of quality healthcare organizations. From a number of conversations with him, I know that he has always wanted with all his heart to make an impact on others' lives. That desire has driven him to succeed over and over again.

Having tasted communism under Castro and seeing people have their hope of a better life crushed by a totalitarian regime, Perez is in love with the U.S. You can hear it in his voice. He never forgets for a single day what this country has meant to him, his wife and his three daughters. He also believes in the hope and promise of the healthcare industry he has served for so long.



Perez arrived in the country with virtually nothing but the clothes on his back. He had little education and didn't have any idea how he would be treated in the U.S. The whole thing had to be scary for the young man. But he accepted the challenge and never looked back.

Working his way through school, Perez received a bachelor's degree in business in 1970 from Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Md., and a master's in healthcare administration in 1975 from George Washington University in Washington.

Today he is president and chief executive officer of Kettering (Ohio) Adventist HealthCare Corp. and its constituent facilities Kettering Medical Center and Grandview Medical Center in Dayton,

Ohio. Previously he was the leader of many other organizations including: New England Memorial Hospital in Stoneham, Mass.; and two healthcare institutions in Puerto Rico.

In short, he has paid his dues and comprehends the myriad problems healthcare faces. He has faced most of them already.

Perez also served on the American Hospital Association's board for three years. He told a local business journal that from that experience, "You realize how diverse the issues confronting healthcare policy are in different regions of the country. One of the

things that you are capable, then, of bringing back to your local institution and your market is an understanding (of) a trend once it is implemented."

Perez is optimistic about the future of healthcare. He thinks we will eventually solve the problems of the uninsured and quality. His system is working on implementing an electronic health-record system.

A member of the AHA's diversity task force who is a walking, breathing embodiment of diversity, he also sees a bright future for young people of all ethnic and racial groups seeking careers in healthcare.

Frank Perez is living his version of the American dream, which is helping others live fuller and richer lives.

**Opportunity is everywhere,**

*Charles S. Lauer is the former vice president-publishing and editorial director of Modern Healthcare. He now is a consultant to the healthcare industry and also serves on the boards of healthcare companies.*

