

## Boston cardiologist saves boy Family coming to Boston to fete Children's doctor



In a last-ditch effort to save their baby, a desperate Florida couple turned to a Boston-based company with an all-star board of physicians that reviews difficult cases.

A Hub pediatric cardiologist working for the company, Best Doctors, looked through the little boy's medical records, determined that he had been misdiagnosed and figured out a way to save him.

"He gave us our child back," Denise Sanders said of Dr. Pedro del Nido, chief of cardiac surgery at Children's Hospital Boston, who was recently profiled as one of the world's top pediatric cardiologists in a Herald story. "Before him, we had no hope of (Michael) living."

Now, a year and a half after Michael's open-heart surgery, his very grateful family is returning to Boston to thank the doctor and the company that put them together.

Little Michael Sanders was born healthy, his mother recalled from her Florida home yesterday. But after a few weeks, something went amiss.

"He was having feeding problems, he was tired and it seemed like he was in pain," she said.

A seemingly routine doctor's visit brought devastating news: the baby had a fatal, congenital heart defect and just a few weeks to live.

"They said he would never, ever have a normal functioning heart," his mother recalled, "and they said nothing could be done to fix it."

After a second medical opinion supported that finding, the heartbroken Sanders family welcomed hospice workers into their home, and began calling funeral homes and the local church.

Then someone at Liberty Mutual, where Denise works as a sales representative, told her about a new employee benefit called Best Doctors.

The health benefits firm relies on a network of 46,000 physicians to review medical cases and confirm or change diagnoses.

The company was founded in 1989 by two Harvard Medical School physicians who wanted to make the best medical expertise available to everyone. The company's services are available to 15 million members in 30 countries.

"I was a little afraid to call at first," Denise Sanders said, "but then I thought, at least it will confirm what we already know."

After gathering Michael's various tests, Best Doctors asked del Nido to review the case. Right away, he determined that the boy's condition had been misdiagnosed.

"They told us his heart was reversed," Denise recalled.

In May 2008, del Nido performed life-saving surgery. Now Michael is a rambunctious toddler, whose high-energy shouts could be heard in the background during yesterday's telephone interview.

The entire family is arriving in Boston today to see del Nido and the people at Best Doctors.

The company is paying for the trip, said Helen Thomas, a Best Doctors member advocate who has worked with the Sanders family.

The firm wanted to celebrate their work, instead of having a lavish holiday party, she said.

"I can't wait to see him," said Thomas, who last saw Michael in a hospital bed, recovering from open-heart surgery. "When I first met him, he was so tiny and sickly and now he's a normal little boy."