

Small World Pediatrics Helps Families Navigate The Covid Pandemic

By **CELESTE McLAUGHLIN**

The doctors of Small World Pediatrics in Wesley Chapel are invested in the community as pediatricians, parents, business owners and neighbors.

Over the past year, while the Covid-19 pandemic has caused uncertainty and fear, they have reached out to use their experience and expertise to bring solid medical information and hope to the local community.

José Jiménez, M.D., and Nancy Silva, M.D., are a husband-and-wife team with two kids, ages 15 and seven. As Meadow Pointe residents for 19 years, their kids attend local schools and participate in Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, where Dr. Silva serves as a troop leader.

Their practice is located in the Windguard Professional Center across Bruce B. Downs (BBD) Blvd. from the AdventHealth Wesley Chapel (AHWC) hospital.

Dr. Jiménez first opened Small World Pediatrics in 2003 in the Northwoods plaza on BBD, near Target, and moved the office to its current location in 2010.

He earned his Bachelor's degree from the University of Florida in Gainesville in 1992, after transferring from Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. Dr. Jiménez then earned his Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) degree from the

University of South Florida (USF) College of Medicine in Tampa in 1996, and completed his pediatric residency at USF in 2000.

Dr. Silva earned her M.D. degree from the State University of New York (SUNY) Health Science Center in Brooklyn in 1997, after earning her Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree in an Honors B.S./M.D. program at the City University of New York (CUNY) Brooklyn College in 1993. Like Dr. Jiménez, she also completed her residency at USF in 2000. She worked for a group in Brandon until joining Small World Pediatrics in 2014.

Over the past 15 months, they say their practice has changed quite a bit. Even before the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention came out with guidance for Covid-19 in 2020, Dr. Silva started implementing procedures in the office to keep their patients and staff safe. More than a year later, those procedures have become routine, as every surface is cleaned with hospital-grade disinfectant between every patient, and the doctors and staff do not remove their masks.

Patients now start all of their appointments from their car via Skype, to minimize the number of people in the office and the amount of time they spend in the office, as well as to ensure the flow of patients is managed so that people don't cross paths in

the hallways or waiting room.

But, the biggest change may be how the couple spends their Sundays, by going live on their Facebook page to share what they have learned about Covid from their research and experience.

"Our goal is to offer honest, helpful, hopeful information," says Dr. Silva, who adds that they started with just one video but decided to continue weekly because there is so much information to share and people continue to say it is helpful to them.

"People are overwhelmed," Dr. Silva explains, noting that she and Dr. Jiménez are keeping up on all of the latest data and information from many sources, so they can be a resource for the community, especially for their patients who have developed a relationship with them and trust them.

They often share the latest CDC guidelines and their opinions on them, including the latest relaxation of rules about face masks for fully vaccinated people (see below).

They also share their personal experiences, such as which schooling option they chose for their own kids last fall, and what they'll do now that some counties — and even the CDC — are changing mask mandates.

"I can tell you what I recommend as a minimum," says Dr. Silva. "Or I may do more than that for my kid."



José Jiménez, M.D., and his wife, Nancy Silva, M.D., are the husband-and-wife team at Small World Pediatrics in Wesley Chapel and longtime local residents..

She adds, "The CDC states that the science shows that breakthrough Covid illness in fully vaccinated individuals is limited and mostly resulting in mild disease. Hence, fully vaccinated individuals do not need to wear a mask indoors and do not need to socially distance, 'except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules,




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and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.’ In practical terms, this means that masks are still required in medical offices, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons & public travel. In addition, it is still recommended for fully vaccinated people to wear masks in environments that are densely populated, for example, at concerts.

She also notes that, “Anyone who is not fully vaccinated still needs to wear a mask. This means that children 2 to 11 years old should wear masks. In addition, those ages 12 and up who are not fully vaccinated are recommended to wear a mask. Full vaccination occurs two weeks or more after they have received the 2nd dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or two weeks or more after they have received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.”

The doctors say that in the future, they hope their video series will become a monthly conversation about pediatric issues that may include Covid-19, but that won’t be the only topic of conversation, as it has been for the more than 60 weeks in a row they have gone live on Facebook at noon on Sundays.

They intentionally focus on what they have to be both hopeful and grateful for, even in the midst of very difficult times.

“At the end of every episode, we always talk about what we’re grateful for,” explains Dr. Jiménez. “So many people have lost so much. Not only loved ones, but also contact with loved ones, travel and activities, but there’s always something to be grateful for.”



They say their practice has seen many mental health issues over the past year and they don’t expect all of their patients to make the same decisions they do. Since every child is different, what’s best for that child might be different, too.

“We’re here to answer questions,” says Dr. Jiménez. “We ask them if they have any questions about the vaccines, now that they’re available for children. We have some patients who are not planning to vaccinate, others have questions and ask us because they value our opinion, and others don’t have questions and are ready to vaccinate.”

The doctors expect to begin giving Covid-19 vaccines to patients ages 12 and up in their office as soon as they receive them, which they anticipate will be in late May,

about the same time this issue hits mailboxes.

To find out if (or when) appointments are (or will be) available and how to sign up, visit [Facebook.com/SmallWorldPediatrics](https://www.facebook.com/SmallWorldPediatrics).

“People need to be informed and make their own decisions, and we’re here to give them the best practical medical and scientific advice,” Dr. Silva says. “We hope they get vaccinated and mask up to protect themselves and others, and we want to be here to help them with their concerns and support them.”

Dr. Silva says people across the country are leaving the medical field because they don’t want to be exposed to Covid-19, but their staff has done a “wonderful job in a really hard year.”

She credits Shaneka Phillips, a medical assistant who also is acting as the practice’s office manager, and medical receptionist Tonya Weicht for going above and beyond to help patients.

The team works hard to cultivate an atmosphere where patients feel like family, and Dr. Jiménez is proud that many people who started with the practice in 2003 are still active patients.

That includes the Childers family, who live in Meadow Pointe. Jamie Childers says she has been taking her kids, now ages 17, 15, and 9, to Small World Pediatrics since they moved to the area when her oldest was just three months old and the practice was new.

“My son is very proud of the fact that he’s one of their oldest patients,” Jamie says.

“I absolutely adore both doctors,” she says. “They have been wonderful resources for us whenever we’ve had questions.”

She says what she loved in the beginning was that anytime Dr. Jiménez didn’t have an answer off the top of his head, he would tell her honestly that he didn’t know, and then research the question to find the best answer, and follow up to let her know what he found.

“These days,” Jamie adds, “it’s very rare to get an ‘I don’t know’ (from them) because they are constantly doing research and they really do have the answers.”

Jamie also says she likes going to Small World Pediatrics because she appreciates that they support local school Parent Teacher Associations and give back to the community in other ways. “They are so absolutely loving towards everybody,” she says. “They’re professional, but they’re down to earth and caring, too.”

As an example, Dr. Silva says, “My son & I volunteered at Metropolitan Ministries and Feeding Tampa Bay this year. We wanted to do as much as we could to help our community in these difficult times, especially with food insecurity at such a high rate.”

Small World Pediatrics is located at 2527 Windguard Cir., Suite 102, and is open Mon.–Fri., 9 a.m.–5 p.m. For more information, visit [SmallWorldPediatrics.com](https://www.SmallWorldPediatrics.com), see the ad on page 34 or call (813) 907-8001.

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