**School of Medicine – University of California, Riverside**

The School of Medicine at the University of California, Riverside (UCR) has a mission distinctive among U.S. medical schools. It was created to expand and diversify the physician workforce in Inland Southern California and to develop research and healthcare delivery programs that will improve the health of underserved populations living in the region. Inland Southern California – a geographically large, ethnically diverse, and rapidly growing region of 4.3 million people – has the state’s greatest shortage of primary care physicians, with just 43 primary care physicians per 100,000 people, according to the California HealthCare Foundation.[[1]](#footnote-1) The shortage of physicians in the region is likely to worsen considerably with full implementation of the Affordable Care Act. An estimated 500,000 additional residents in the region will gain health coverage either through expanded Medi-Cal (Medicaid) eligibility or the health exchange, further stressing an already overtaxed system.

The region also performs poorly in relation to most other California regions in nearly every measurable health outcome, especially for common chronic conditions such as diabetes and coronary heart disease. For instance, San Bernardino County ranks second worst among California’s 58 counties in deaths due to diabetes and Riverside County is seventh worst in deaths due to coronary heart disease, both largely preventable conditions.[[2]](#footnote-2) Healthcare disparities are particularly pronounced. In Riverside County, African American babies have a significantly higher infant mortality rate than for other racial and ethnic groups. Self-reported asthma diagnoses in Riverside County jumped from 11.3% in 2001 to 17.8% in 2009, with the rate for African Americans doubling from 16.8% to 35.1%.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Responding to these regional needs, UCR in 2013 opened a community-based medical school with a social mission[[4]](#footnote-4) – the sixth school of medicine in the University of California system and the first public medical school on the West Coast in more than 40 years. The curriculum focuses on care for the underserved, ambulatory settings, prevention, wellness, chronic disease management, health disparities, and cultural competence. The UCR School of Medicine is executing two additional strategies to capitalize on the primary drivers of where physicians practice – where they grow up and where they complete residency training. Student pipeline programs, currently spanning middle school through postbaccalaureate studies, are designed to help more of the region’s students become eligible for medical school. The school is also partnering with hospitals in the region to establish new residency training programs. These include training programs in the primary care specialties of general internal medicine, family medicine and primary care pediatrics, as well as the short-supply specialties of general surgery and psychiatry. A residency training program in OB/GYN is planned.

1. “California Physicians: Surplus or Scarcity?” by California HealthCare Foundation, March 2014, <http://www.chcf.org/chart-cart/presentations/physicians>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. County Health Status Profiles 2015, California Department of Public Health and California Conference of Local Health Officers, National Public Health Week, April 6-12, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. County of Riverside Department of Public Health, Community Health Profile 2013, <http://www.rivcoph.org/Portals/0/pdf/2013_Community_Health_Profile.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Olds GR, Barton KA. Building Medical Schools around Social Missions: The Case of the University of California, Riverside. Health Systems and Reform. 2015;1(3):200–206. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)