

Bruce Wintroub, Catherine Lucey and Michael Peterson: UCSF is committed to pediatric patients and their families in the Valley

By Bruce Wintroub, Catherine Lucey and Michael Peterson

In the rapidly growing, diverse San Joaquin Valley, UCSF Fresno is rooted in the community and committed to the patients we serve.

Four decades ago, in partnership with the state Legislature, UCSF established clinical residency training programs in Fresno. Our goal? To ensure a steady source of high quality physicians to serve the Valley. That commitment, which remains true today, is based on the continuation of existing partnerships and establishment of new collaborations.

Over the years, about 40% of the approximately 3,000 physicians who have trained at UCSF Fresno have stayed in the Valley, contributing to the health and well-being of our patients and the economic success of our community.

One of these residency programs trains pediatricians. For decades, UCSF Fresno, Community Regional Medical Center and Valley Children's Hospital have collaborated to give young physicians outstanding training in pediatrics.

Leveraging the expertise found in all of our faculty and institutions, our pediatric residents care for patients from birth through adolescence and beyond. Not only do they learn the art and science of caring for infants and children, they also learn how to be members of a collaborative group of physicians, committed to improving health in our community.

Recent events are threatening the ability of UCSF Fresno to continue to train physicians using this highly successful model.

On Jan. 7, without consultation, Valley Children's announced its intent to sever its longstanding relationship with UCSF Fresno and embark on a path to develop its own residency program in pediatrics — a move that can only hurt the quality of pediatric training programs in the Valley.

As leaders of UCSF and UCSF Fresno, we declined Valley Children's request, asking it to reconsider its decision to dismantle this successful relationship so that neither our residents nor our community suffers.

We would like very much to continue the existing pediatric residency program. The current program is a success because it is a collaborative practice among Community Medical Centers, Valley Children's and UCSF. And, it is a program that has fostered and supported the training of pediatric residents within the community that needs and wants them.

Indeed, the mission of training pediatricians to serve the San Joaquin Valley is so vital to us and the Valley community that UCSF is committed to continuing it, even if changes in partnerships are required.

Last week, UCSF and Community Medical Centers announced the signing of a letter of intent (LOI) to increase pediatric and women's health services in Fresno and the Valley.

Community Medical Centers is a major physician training site in the Valley. Each year, more than 12,000 babies are born at Community Regional Medical Center (CRMC). These babies and their families need a comprehensive network of primary and subspecialty care by pediatricians who know and understand our community. The LOI between UCSF and CMC is intended to reinforce our relationship with this critical partner in education and care to

strengthen the existing pediatric services in the Valley, those provided by CRCMC and Valley Children's.

This LOI is another way in which UCSF fulfills its decades-long commitment to the Valley, a commitment sparked when the Legislature first asked the University of California to establish a training program to help ensure the Valley was served by high-caliber physicians with a commitment to the health and wellness of Valley residents.

Finally, our future vision is twofold.

First, we must work to ensure that the highly regarded and long-standing pediatric residency program provided by Community Medical Centers, Valley Children's and UCSF remains in place and is strengthened to elevate its role in providing health care services to Valley residents and in training the region's next generation of doctors.

Second, UCSF will remain an important part of ensuring the Valley's expanded access to high-quality health care — including women's and pediatric care — through enhanced partnerships with the region's locally based providers, including both Community Medical Centers and Valley Children's.

The long-standing intention of the Legislature has been that the University of California play a pivotal role in addressing the health care needs of the Valley.

UCSF is unequivocally committed to remaining true to that intention. Otherwise, communities lose. Patients lose. We all lose.

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