

ORANGE COUNTY, Calif., Oct. 2, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The University of California Board of Regents, on behalf of [UC Irvine Health](#), and the Board of Directors of [MemorialCare Health System](#) in Southern California, announced they are entering into an affiliation agreement to expand access to high quality, cost effective health care throughout Orange County and create new, innovative models of care that improve the health and well-being of their communities.

UC Irvine Health and MemorialCare Health System will begin this collaboration with a partnership to open new state-of-the-art primary care health centers. Both will remain independent health systems. UC Irvine Health is internationally known for its academic medical center, education of future physicians, breakthrough clinical research and pioneering new therapies and techniques. MemorialCare is a nationally prominent integrated delivery system and acknowledged pioneer in evidence-based medicine with six top hospitals and more than 200 care sites in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

These centers will offer individual and family health services, urgent care, prevention, wellness and basic diagnostic services. Staffed by UC Irvine Health community-based primary care physicians, the new health centers will be available in communities with shortages of primary care physicians and will complement the existing UC Irvine primary care faculty practices located in Orange and Irvine.

"This affiliation demonstrates a steadfast commitment to integrated delivery of patient care, which is essential to providing excellent quality care while reducing costs to consumers, businesses and insurers. All communities we serve will benefit from the affiliation of our not-for-profit, mission-driven systems, both with excellent reputations and strong financial

performance," explained Barry Arbuckle, PhD, president and CEO of MemorialCare Health System.

"Together, we will fulfill our joint mission of providing exceptional, personalized care that is driven by research with the latest and most advanced technologies and techniques available that promote better health and healing," said Terry Belmont, CEO of UC Irvine Medical Center. "This is driven by a shared passion for innovation, grounded in the most advanced medical and scientific knowledge."

As an expansive, integrated network with broad access throughout Orange County, the partnership will be better able to serve the changing needs of consumers, employers and health plans and offer new innovative products such as tailored networks. Comprehensive care will be provided by the two health systems' thousands of affiliated physicians and other clinicians and support staff.

What makes this collaboration unique is that it is the only health care partnership in Orange and Southern Los Angeles

counties that includes the entire continuum of care. Services range from an academic medical center, teaching and research hospitals, a children's hospital and community hospitals to scores of physician practices, outpatient centers, imaging facilities, ambulatory surgery centers, urgent care, a health plan and retail health. Each element of this affiliation is ideally positioned to manage the health of the individuals and families they serve throughout the region. This also builds upon the two health systems' nearly four decades of collaboration in graduate medical education, which resulted in the training of thousands of residents and fellows who have become today's physicians.

UC Irvine Health will collaborate with the MemorialCare Medical Foundation to develop the new primary care health centers, leveraging the Foundation's infrastructure and extensive expertise in physician practice management and operations.

"MemorialCare Medical Foundation currently includes 3,000 primary care and specialty physicians in two divisions—MemorialCare Medical Group and the Greater Newport Physicians (GNP) Independent Practice Association (IPA)—located throughout the two-county region," said Mark Schafer, M.D., Chief Medical Officer of MemorialCare Medical Foundation. UC Irvine Health primary care physicians will be included as providers in MemorialCare's health plan

contracts, which will offer consumers expanded access to physician networks wherever they live or work in Orange County.

"We are combining our strengths to expand access to high quality, fully integrated care for the entire range of medical diagnoses and treatments—from primary care to the rarest, most complex conditions to care in inpatient and outpatient settings," added Dr. Schafer. The expansion of primary care health centers also provides opportunities for physicians who complete their training at UC Irvine Medical School to stay in the area and serve local communities, helping to address primary care physician shortages.

"As MemorialCare and UC Irvine Health expand their primary care presence in Orange County, opportunities will be created to attract and recruit new, highly sought-after physician graduates of UC Irvine School of Medicine," said Ralph V. Clayman, M.D., Dean of UC Irvine School of Medicine. "Over the past 10 years, a quarter of the school's new physicians have remained in the region, and this affiliation will allow for those numbers to increase significantly."

Additionally, UC Irvine Health and MemorialCare will fully integrate both systems' advanced electronic medical records system to ensure coordinated care and real-time access to patients' histories and medical information wherever they may be treated within the inpatient and outpatient network.

"Since 1975, MemorialCare has been an important partner of the UC Irvine School of Medicine. Primary and specialty care residents and fellows have trained at MemorialCare hospitals in Los Angeles and Orange counties, beginning with a long and strong relationship with Long Beach Memorial and Miller Children's Hospital," said Dr. Clayman. The residents and fellows working at MemorialCare hospitals are under the direction of MemorialCare physicians who hold faculty appointments from the School of Medicine. At any given time, up to 20 percent of the more than 600 UC Irvine School of Medicine residents and fellows are based at MemorialCare's adult and pediatric hospitals.

"UC Irvine Health is proud to partner with MemorialCare in the development of new, innovative

models of high quality, research-driven care," said Belmont. "We are committed to improving the health of the residents of these communities and are expanding our academic/teaching focus to better serve their needs." UC Irvine Health is comprised of UC Irvine Medical Center, Orange County's only academic health center, as well as UC Irvine School of Medicine and UC Irvine Health Physicians and Surgeons.

"MemorialCare is committed to pursuing strategic alliances that ensure a strong future for our patients, physicians, employees and communities," described Arbuckle. "The affiliation with the renowned UC Irvine Health system demonstrates this commitment." In recent months, MemorialCare announced the start of its Seaside Health Plan as well as partnerships offering neighborhood imaging facilities and ambulatory surgery centers in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

UC Irvine Health comprises the clinical, medical education and research enterprises of the University of California, Irvine

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[UC Irvine Health](#)

at physician offices throughout

Orange County

and at its main campus, UC Irvine Medical Center in Orange, Calif.

, a 412-bed acute care hospital that provides tertiary and quaternary care, ambulatory and specialty medical clinics, and behavioral health and rehabilitation services.

U.S. News & World Report

has listed it among "America's Best Hospitals" for 13 consecutive years. UC Irvine Medical Center is home to

Orange County's

only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center, high-risk perinatal/neonatal program, Level I trauma center and Level II pediatric trauma center. It is also the primary teaching hospital for the UC Irvine School of Medicine. UC Irvine Health serves a region of more than 3 million people in

Orange County

, western

Riverside County

and southeast

Los Angeles County

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MemorialCare Health System is a not-for-profit Southern California integrated delivery

system with more than 200 care sites, 12,000 employees, 3,000 affiliated physicians and six top hospitals – Long Beach Memorial, Miller Children's Hospital Long Beach, Community Hospital Long Beach, Orange Coast Memorial Medical Center and Saddleback Memorial Medical Center in Laguna Hills and San Clemente

; a medical group – MemorialCare Medical Group; an Independent Practice Association – Greater Newport Physician/GNP; Seaside Health Plan; MemorialCare HealthExpress retail clinics; imaging facilities; ambulatory surgery centers; and numerous outpatient centers throughout the Southland. It is among 32 employers worldwide recognized with the prestigious Gallup Great Workplace Award.

U.S. News & World Report

identified MemorialCare hospitals among California's

best with 23 high performance rankings in a number of specialties. MemorialCare Medical Group and GNP have been consistently honored with Elite Status by California Association for Physician Groups, the highest rating possible for medical groups in the state.

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