

UCSD Planning New Cardiovascular Center, Thornton Hospital Expansion

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The Regents of the University of California have given approval for UCSD to begin formal planning toward the construction of a new Cardiovascular Center facility, and expansion of services at the John M. and Sally B. Thornton Hospital on the UCSD East Campus medical complex in La Jolla. The action was taken May 20 at the Regents' meeting in San Francisco.

In recent years, the UCSD Cardiovascular Center Board has raised \$30 million to build a dedicated, state-of-the-art Cardiovascular Center to centralize UCSD's clinical and clinical research activities in heart and vascular disease and stroke management.

"Heart disease and stroke are the #1 and #3 killers in the United States," said Edward W. Holmes, UCSD's Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences, adding that in San Diego, the rapid population growth along with the growth in the older population will lead to increased demand for cardiovascular services.

"Thanks to the generosity of our community friends, we are nearing the realization of our plans to provide advanced care and access to clinical trials in one state-of-the-art facility, where patients will have access to a full range of diagnostic and treatment options," he said.

Holmes also announced the appointment of Anthony DeMaria, M.D., an internationally respected cardiologist and researcher who specializes in cardiac diagnostics and ultrasound, as Director of the UCSD Cardiovascular Center.

DeMaria, who holds the Judith and Jack White Chair in Cardiology at UCSD, was recruited in 1992 to serve as chief of UCSD's cardiology division and has been instrumental in the development of the Cardiovascular Center program. DeMaria has served as president of both the American College of Cardiology and the American Society of Echocardiography, and has served on the editorial boards of most of the major cardiology journals. He currently is editor-in-chief of the prestigious *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*.

According to DeMaria, basic research discoveries over the last decade have yielded multiple compounds and devices of great potential value in the diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular diseases. At the same time, the increasing prevalence of these disorders will require a greater number of cardiovascular specialists.

"Our goal for the UCSD Cardiovascular Center is to be a model of translational research, evaluating new drugs and technologies and bringing the best into the clinical setting for the benefit of patients," said DeMaria. "As a university, we will also serve as a vehicle to educate cardiologists in applying these new technologies."

UCSD's East Campus medical center complex is site of a growing number of specialized patient care centers and related research programs, including the Rebecca and John Moores UCSD Cancer Center, currently under construction, and the Shiley Eye Center.

The UCSD Thornton Hospital, which opened in 1993, anchors the medical complex and will also be expanded as part of this project. The facility is either nearing or at capacity in many key services; of particular concern is the inadequate number of intensive care (ICU) beds.

"The area around Thornton Hospital is one of the fastest growing in San Diego, and one of the fastest aging," said Richard J. Liekweg, Chief Executive Office of UCSD Medical Center. "Our emergency department and intensive care beds are frequently operating at capacity. With the changing demographics, our projections indicate that we will not have adequate space and services to meet the health needs of our growing community, and especially the higher level of specialty and critical care needs of an older population, unless we expand in key areas, including cardiovascular services."

Planning will focus on adding ICU beds, expanding the emergency room, and adding some operating rooms, cardiac catheterization labs, and other procedure rooms and support space to Thornton Hospital. The adjacent Cardiovascular Center is proposed to include 16-20 examination rooms, related diagnostic and treatment services and office space.

Completed plans for the full project will be presented to the Regents within a year for final approval. In addition to the philanthropic support, the project will be funded from cash reserves and debt-financing.

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