

When it comes to physician shortages, don't forget psychiatrists

10 March 2016, by Kathy Barton

Dr. Gerald Maguire, chair and professor of psychiatry and neuroscience in the UCR School of Medicine, testified March 9 on access to mental health services, severe shortages of mental health providers and strategies the medical school is undertaking to address workforce needs.

California workforce shortages in [mental health](#) was the focus of the joint hearing convened by the California Senate Committee on Health and Subcommittee on Healthcare Workforce and Access to Care.

"In our region – Inland Southern California – there is a severe shortage of physicians in all of the primary care specialties and most other non-primary care specialties, including psychiatry," Maguire said.

The School of Medicine at the University of California, Riverside is actively working to grow the mental health workforce by expanding residency training in psychiatry and experimenting with a novel educational debt reduction incentive.

Residency programs provide the post-M.D. training required for physicians to become fully independent and board certified in their specialties. Psychiatry training programs are four years long and, during that time, residents provide patient care under the supervision of attending physicians who are faculty of the residency program.

The increase in residency training slots will help to expand the number of trained psychiatrists in the region and the partnerships with the public mental health system in Riverside County will encourage residents to practice in the area after completion of their [residency program](#), he said.

"These are the strategies we have employed at UCR to expand the mental health workforce, specifically for the benefit of our region and in alignment with our mission to serve our

community," Maguire stated.

Additionally, the UCR School of Medicine is in the early stages of developing a tele-psychiatry program in Riverside County.

"There are many rural areas where there are no on-site [mental health providers](#)," said Maguire. "Tele-psychiatry has the potential to greatly expand access to mental and behavioral health in our county."

The committee also heard testimony from other educational institutions training the mental health workforce, state agencies that administer loan repayment programs, and organizations that employ the mental health workforce.

The UCR School of Medicine will graduate its first class of students in 2017. The mission of the [school](#) is to improve the health of the people of California and, especially, to serve inland Southern California by [training](#) a diverse workforce of physicians and by developing innovative research and health care delivery programs that will improve the health of the medically underserved in the region and become models to be emulated throughout the state and nation.

Provided by University of California - Riverside

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