

New medical school planned for San Bernardino County

By Jim Steinberg, The Sun

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Dr. Dev GnanaDev, chief of surgery at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton, Ca., prepares for surgery on Thursday morning. GnanaDev will be starting a medical school near Arrowhead Regional Medical Center. photos by John Valenzuela — Staff Photographer



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A vision of building a medical school in San Bernardino County is part of a life of learning for Dev GnanaDev.

Education was stressed in his home, in his native town of 3,000 in India. That's where his father was the director of a community college.

And the learning continued — through medical school in India, a general surgery residency in New Jersey, a fellowship in cardiovascular surgery at the Arizona Heart Institute in Phoenix and an MBA from Cal State San Bernardino. His six siblings are now physicians practicing in the United States; one is a computer engineer, and one has a master's degree in science.

So, as GnanaDev, now a longtime surgeon, looked at education in San Bernardino County, he saw a need.

The idea for a new medical school entered his mind in 2010, after executives from a Caribbean medical school asked Arrowhead Regional Medical Center if they would accept their graduates into its residency program.

GnanaDev visited the school, and discovered many of its students were graduates of UC Berkeley and UCLA.

"Four out of the top 10 schools in the world are in California," he said. "But it's sad we don't have enough medical schools. There are at least 3,000 California kids in Caribbean medical schools. That is a failure to provide enough medical schools in our area."

And that has GnanaDev, chief of surgery at ARMC, and [until recently its medical director](#), on the cusp of building a hub in Colton that caters to medical students from the area.

He's planning a new private, nonprofit medical school, where students would come primarily from the

Inland Empire and would reflect the ethnic mix of their local communities, officials said Tuesday in a news conference announcing the venture.

The founding group for the California University of Science and Medicine, or Cal Med, to be based in Colton, is led by GnanaDev, also the former California Medical Association president.

As head of the CMA, GnanaDev made frequent trips to Washington during the formative period of the Affordable Care Act. Although the Inland Empire has three medical schools, the region faced a [shortage of 3,000 physicians](#) before national healthcare reform became fully implemented this year.

Dr. G. Richard Olds, dean of the School of Medicine at UC Riverside, said the two-county region's doctor shortage will grow to 5,000 by 2021.

Philip Pumerantz, president and founder of Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, which operates the region's largest medical school, in terms of students, said there may be demand in the region for five medical schools.

The difficulty in determining demand is that students from Cal Med's first class of doctors won't be entering practice until 2023, he said.

Pumerantz said the goal of opening the new medical school in fall 2016 "is a big challenge" but doable.

The Cal Med medical school is being financed primarily through a \$40 million donation from Prime Healthcare Foundation, which is founded by Dr. Prem Reddy, a cardiologist who is founder, chairman and president of Prime Healthcare Services, which operates 25 hospitals in six states.

On Monday, Reddy said he would make more funding available if it is needed for the launch.

The first class is expected to be 50 students in the fall 2016, which would grow to 150 in a few years.

GnanaDev said that Cal Med would contain a research element and additional allied healthcare components such as schools for nursing, physician assistants and physical therapy.

Cal Med would be housed at a temporary site until a permanent facility can be built near ARMC, on what is now vacant land on the southeast corner of North Meridian Avenue and Valley Boulevard.

GnanaDev said his group will work with the area high schools to get students involved in the health professions while they are still attending high school.

Cal Med board members include Albert K. Karnig, former Cal State San Bernardino president, and Dustin Corcoran, chief executive officer of the California Medical Association.

Reddy is chairman of the CMA board, while GnanaDev is founder, president and chief executive officer.

College of Medicine faculty leadership include Dr. Rodney Borger, ARMC chairman of emergency medicine; Dr. David Lanum, ARMC chairman of family medicine; and Dr. Webster Wong, ARMC chairman of the department of pediatrics.

Jim Steinberg covers environment and healthcare issues for The Sun and the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin. Reach the author at jim.steinberg@langnews.com or follow Jim on Twitter: [@JamesDSteinberg](https://twitter.com/JamesDSteinberg).



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