

TRANSFORMING OPERATING ROOMS  
FOR QUALITY AND PATIENT SAFETY

DRAWING HEALING STRENGTH  
FROM A SERENE SETTING

**UCI Health**

Powered by UC Irvine

# live well

EXCEPTIONAL HEALTHCARE FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

SUMMER 2025

## Setting a New Standard in Hospital Care

Discover how UCI Health — Irvine is transforming  
the future of healing.



# DISCOVER NEXT-GENERATION HOSPITAL CARE



In this issue of *Live Well*, we celebrate the upcoming opening of UCI Health — Irvine, our new seven-story, 144-bed acute care hospital and 24-hour emergency department. It embodies the latest in hospital care, combining innovative technologies with thoughtful design to create a welcoming sanctuary of healing for patients and family members.

We are extraordinarily proud of this state-of-the-art facility and the visionaries who have worked tirelessly to bring it to fruition. As home to the nation's first all-electric acute care hospital, UCI Health, Orange

County's only academic health system, already has captured the world's attention for delivering healthcare sustainably. Across our Irvine medical campus, we are using safe, energy-efficient natural materials and processes.

In these pages, learn how patient safety, quality care and sustainability are woven into the hospital's design, from its surgical megafloor and family-friendly patient rooms to the chef-inspired, locally sourced cuisine that will raise the bar for hospital food.

By orienting our hospital to overlook the San Joaquin Marsh Reserve, we believe our patients, visitors and co-workers will draw strength and inspiration from the serene 300-acre vista. Discover how we are fully embracing nature's role in healing with natural light, artwork emphasizing soothing natural landscapes, outdoor terraces set amid nature trails and gardens full of native plants.

When UCI Health — Irvine opens in December, it will be the capstone of our \$1.3 billion medical campus, which includes the Joe C. Wen & Family Center for Advanced Care and the Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center and Ambulatory Care building. For the first time, residents of coastal and south Orange County will have full and convenient access to leading-edge care that is the hallmark of academic medicine.

Less than 2 miles away, we will open the UCI Health Rehabilitation Hospital next summer. The 52-bed hospital, a joint-venture partnership between UCI Health and Lifepoint Rehabilitation, will offer the latest therapeutic technologies and healing methods to patients recovering from stroke, traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries, amputation and other severe conditions.

Even if you don't live in coastal or south Orange County, a UCI Health facility is likely nearby. In 2024, UCI Health acquired four hospitals — in Fountain Valley, Lakewood, Los Alamitos and Placentia — that now proudly offer access to high-quality medical care.

We are continuing to expand our network of outpatient locations, too. This fall, clinicians from our world-renowned Gavin Herbert Eye Institute and our otolaryngology experts will offer eye, ear, nose and throat services at a new facility in Brea.

At UCI Health, we are driven by our desire to offer high-quality, friendly and easy-to-access care throughout Orange County and surrounding communities. Because of our talented caregivers and the co-workers who support them, the pioneering healthcare we provide is now closer to your home.

Sincerely,

Chad T. Lefteris, FACHE  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
UCI Health

## UCI Health

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replace the advice of your physician.

## SUPPORT UCI HEALTH

As Orange County's only academic health system, we are pushing the frontiers of lifesaving research while improving health and wellness in our community and beyond.

We cannot succeed without you. Please consider becoming an active partner in charting our future path. With your support, we will make new medical breakthroughs, redefine patient care, educate the next generation of health professionals and promote physical and mental well-being in our communities.

To make a gift supporting the expansion of UCI Health, to thank a provider or honor a loved one's memory, email [supporthealth@uci.edu](mailto:supporthealth@uci.edu), call 714-456-7350 or visit [ucihealth.org/giving](http://ucihealth.org/giving). Your gift also supports the UC Irvine Brilliant Future campaign.

**BRILLIANT FUTURE**  
THE CAMPAIGN FOR UC Irvine

# WELCOME TO UCI HEALTH — IRVINE



UCI Health — Irvine, the acute care hospital at top left, will soon be offering next-generation hospital care. The surrounding campus includes a central plaza overlooking the San Joaquin Marsh Reserve, a meditation garden and natural spaces to stroll, enjoy a meal or relax.

The new acute care hospital at 19210 Jamboree Road in Irvine will feature:

- A 24-hour emergency department with 20 treatment rooms
- Interventional radiology
- Catheterization services
- Stem cell transplant services
- Advanced imaging
- Observation units
- Pharmacy services
- Blood bank, lab and pathology services

## FACT

UCI Health — Irvine will be the nation's first all-electric acute care hospital.

When UCI Health — Irvine opens, the acute care hospital will be the capstone of a \$1.3-billion, 13.5-acre academic medical complex that is the most ambitious expansion of healthcare services in Orange County. The campus comprises three main structures.

- UCI Health — Irvine, a 350,000-square-foot, acute care hospital and emergency department. Opens December 2025.
- The Joe C. Wen & Family Center for Advanced Care, a five-story outpatient facility offering specialty care for children and adults, urgent care services and the UCI Health Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders. Opened 2024.
- The Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center and Ambulatory Care building, a 193,000-square-foot tower with 36 private exam rooms, 40 infusion bays and eight operating suites. Opened 2024.

## BY THE NUMBERS

**Seven** stories

**10** state-of-the-art operating rooms (8 at opening)

**4** interventional surgical suites

**1** surgical procedure room

**144** patient suites averaging 250 square feet

**75-inch** video screens, tablets in each room

**Sleeper sofas** and **private showers** in each suite

**2,200** parking spaces

**All meals** chef-inspired and locally sourced



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## UCI HEALTH WELCOMES RENOWNED INTEGRATIVE ONCOLOGY EXPERT



Dr. Gary E. Deng

An internationally renowned integrative medicine pioneer has been named director of the new Integrative Oncology Program at the UCI Health

Center, in partnership with the Susan Samueli Integrative Health Institute.

Dr. Gary E. Deng, who built a highly regarded integrative medicine program in his nearly two decades at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, says his goal at UCI Health is to help each patient achieve the best outcome by improving their mental, physical and spiritual well-being in their fight against cancer.

Dr. Richard Van Etten, director of the cancer center, calls Deng's arrival a pivotal moment for cancer care at UCI Health and the Samueli Institute. "We have the infrastructure — including supportive oncology, palliative care and rehabilitation medicine — to change the standard of care in this increasingly important area of cancer medicine," he says.

Deng's vision "aligns powerfully with our mission to transform cancer care," adds Dr. Shaista Malik, executive director of the Samueli Institute. "I'm confident that he will help shape how integrative

oncology is practiced and studied here at UCI Health and nationwide."

Deng sees the integrative oncology approach as essential to each cancer patient's experience throughout their treatment, survivorship and prevention of disease.

"We are focused on optimizing a patient's nutrition, exercise, stress management, sleep and circadian rhythms, as well as their social environment and positive elements in life," he said. "This helps patients have a better quality of life with fewer side effects during treatment, making them more likely to finish the full course of therapy for maximum benefit. It also enables them to recover quicker and achieve better health after active cancer treatment."

Deng earned his medical degree from Beijing Medical University, followed by a residency in internal medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, where he received research training at MD Anderson Cancer Center. He also holds a PhD in microbiology and immunology from the University of Miami in Florida.

## UCI HEALTH EARNS NATION'S HIGHEST SUSTAINABILITY HONOR

UCI Health — Orange, formerly known as UCI Medical Center, has been recognized as one of the nation's top hospitals in sustainability initiatives with the prestigious Practice Greenhealth Top 25 Environmental Excellence Award. This is the first time the hospital has received the Top 25 honor and the fourth consecutive year it has been recognized by the organization.

Practice Greenhealth is the nation's leading organization dedicated to environmental sustainability in healthcare. More than 1,400 U.S. hospitals and healthcare systems are part of the Practice Greenhealth network.

"This award further underscores the leadership of UCI Health in environmental stewardship and excellence in sustainable healthcare practices," says Chad T. Lafferis, president and CEO of UCI Health. "At the heart of our efforts to integrate sustainable practices into our organization is a dedication to the health and well-being of our community. We are proud to lead by example in the transformation of healthcare."

UCI Health — Orange also received the Making Medicine Mercury Free Award, which recognizes organizations that have made significant steps toward eliminating mercury from their facilities. Mercury is popular in healthcare, found in thermometers and other devices. It's also dangerous; spills are considered a health threat.

UCI Health has a Sustainability Leadership Committee to drive initiatives across the organization. This 20-member multidisciplinary group formed in 2023 and is led by Carmichael and Tony Dover, the UCI Health energy management and sustainability officer.



## ANTI-CANCER CHALLENGE AWARDS \$1.5 MILLION FOR CANCER RESEARCH

The UC Irvine Anti-Cancer Challenge has awarded \$1.5 million raised in 2024 to fund a new round of transformative research projects at the UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center and its pediatric cancer affiliate, Children's Hospital of Orange County.

Launched in 2017, the Anti-Cancer Challenge is an annual ride-run-walk community movement to raise awareness and funds for critical cancer research at the only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center based in Orange County. The event has raised \$6.2 million since 2017, funding more than 150 promising cancer studies and early phase clinical trials.

"These projects are poised to revolutionize the future of cancer diagnosis, treatment and prevention," says Dr. Richard A. Van Etten, the cancer center director and Anti-Cancer Challenge founder.

Among the 32 home-grown research projects selected for funding this year are:

- Treating anemia in myelofibrosis with repurposed drugs, a study by Dr. Angela Fleischman to improve the quality of life for patients with the incurable blood cancer.
- Dr. Michael Demetriou is enhancing a novel technology called GlyTR that targets many types of cancer cells for destruction.

• Jianhua Yu, PhD, is leading a study of an advanced immune cell treatment — CAR T9 cell therapy — for glioblastoma, an extremely challenging type of brain cancer.

**The 2025 Anti-Cancer Challenge will be held Oct. 11 on the UC Irvine campus. To register or learn more visit [anti-cancerchallenge.org](https://anti-cancerchallenge.org)**



Cancer researcher Nick Pannunzio, PhD, and Dr. Richard Van Etten



Volunteers greet visitors at the 2025 Anti-Cancer Challenge kickoff.



## MEDICAL CENTER EARNS 'A' GRADE FOR QUALITY, SAFETY

UCI Health — Orange has built on its long record of quality, achieving another "A" grade in the spring 2025 Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade.

The award highlights the academic health system's ongoing commitment to top-tier patient safety and quality care, consistently placing it among the top 30% of hospitals nationwide. This latest grade brings the UCI Health total to 20 "A" grades since the biannual safety grading began in 2014.

"The entire UCI Health team is committed to providing patients with the safest, highest quality healthcare available," says Dr. Joseph C. Carmichael, UCI Health chief medical officer and senior vice president.

"The Leapfrog Group's 'A' safety grade reflects the unwavering effort and dedication of one of the nation's leading academic health systems."

The Leapfrog Group is an independent national watchdog organization with a 10-year history of assigning "A," "B," "C," "D" or "F" grades to general hospitals in the country.

The grades are based on a hospital's ability to prevent medical errors and harm to patients. The grading system is peer-reviewed, fully transparent and free to the public.

The medical center also was named a top provider of high-quality inpatient and outpatient care in the prestigious annual Vizient Inc. Quality and Accountability Study. It is also one of only five U.S. facilities recognized for excellence in outpatient care in the 2024 Vizient study.

# Discover the Future of Hospital Care

UCI Health — Irvine embodies a new era of inpatient care, embracing innovation, advanced therapies and healing inspired by nature.

WRITTEN BY SHARI ROAN



“Friendly” is not a word typically associated with hospitals. But that word became a guiding concept for UCI Health — Irvine, a seven-story, 144-bed, all-electric acute care hospital, the nation’s first.

More than five years ago, dozens of UCI Health leaders, staff members and patient advocates came together to envision a new hospital that would overlook the serene, 300-acre San Joaquin Marsh Reserve just north of the UC Irvine campus.

Chad T. Lefteris, president and chief executive officer of UCI Health, told planners the building should provoke a different feeling than people normally experience entering a hospital.

“The word reflects Chad’s desire to be the friendliest place to get your healthcare,” says Ellen Khoudari, a senior project manager in UCI Health Planning Administration. “We want you to feel comfortable here, welcomed, as we would welcome friends to our homes. That’s what we do at UCI Health.”

That concept, and so much more about UCI Health — Irvine, defines a hospital that will stand among the most innovative in the country when it opens in December. Powered by the world-class research of UC Irvine, it is the future of healthcare: technologically advanced, sustainable and designed to promote the healing power of nature, says Paul Da Veiga, director of planning, design and construction.

“We know that patients aren’t coming to a hospital because they want to spend a wonderful afternoon here,” Da Veiga says. “People are dealing with serious health issues. But when I give tours of the new hospital, the reaction from many people is, ‘Gosh, I feel like I want to be here or work here.’ This is such a comfortable and friendly environment that folks don’t want to leave.”

## A FULL-SERVICE HOSPITAL

Visitors approaching UCI Health — Irvine will find themselves next to a wildlife refuge dotted with riparian trees and flowing native grasses. The arrival plaza has a central sculptural landscape island and clear signage. The hospital is adjacent to a 2,200-space parking structure with valet service to be available on the lower two levels.

# FOOD DESIGNED TO HEAL

Eating delicious food that nourishes the body and supports the immune system is key to improving overall health. That simple belief has been embraced by the new hospital's dining services managers.

Both the patient and public cafeteria menus were created in collaboration with chef Kelly Kim, who runs Seoul Sister in Downtown Disney. Chef Kim drew on locally popular cuisines to create a menu with numerous Asian, Mexican and American options as well as choices for vegetarians and vegans. Fresh, locally grown produce comes from Irvine-based Tanaka Farms and Vesta Foodservice in Santa Fe Springs. Seafood is sustainably sourced following Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch guidelines. Animal protein is ethically raised and hormone-free.

Daily menus reflect the nutritional requirements of each patient, who then can order food directly from their TV screen whenever they want to eat.

Visitors dining in the indoor/outdoor cafeteria will find a "virtual kitchen" where they can order in advance and choose from multiple payment options. The food is prepared in a kitchen on a floor above and then delivered by a dedicated elevator.

Elsewhere on the medical campus, visitors can find coffee from MoonGoat Coffee Roasters in Santa Ana and pastries and bread from The Crema Cafe of Seal Beach.

"We believe the menu choices should reflect the community," says Lauren Silva, assistant director of UCI Health support services. "Food is comfort, and it is part of the healing process."

Each floor has a purpose. The main level includes a 20-room emergency department (ED) within easy reach of the plaza and parking structure. The ED rooms include fast-track/rapid assessment rooms, regular treatment rooms and a trauma room. To accelerate treatment, an imaging suite with MRIs is adjacent to the ED.

The garden level, which has a separate entrance, is a surgical megafloor that stretches from the hospital to the adjacent outpatient surgery center beneath the new UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center and Ambulatory Care building. A wholly unique space the width of nearly three football fields, the megafloor will have 18 spacious operating rooms for inpatient and outpatient surgeries. (Read more about the surgical megafloor on page 10.)

Infection control is emphasized throughout the hospital with easy-to-clean surfaces and ventilation that exceeds requirements for air turnover, Da Veiga says. The seventh-floor oncology unit relies on positive air pressure and materials that reduce the risk of infections. The floor is home to the Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant and Cellular Therapy Program, the only adult program in Orange County to offer advanced cellular treatments for cancer and other diseases. Even the operating

rooms have special air-flow systems to protect the sterile surgical field.

In keeping with the UCI Health emphasis on team-based care, each hospital floor has large rooms where physicians, nurses, social workers, nutritionists, therapists and other caregivers can collaborate, such as when practicing responses to a "code blue" or other emergency situation.

"Collaboration spaces are very important for care delivery today," says Dr. Alpesh N. Amin, associate dean for Clinical Transformation for the UC Irvine School of Medicine and UCI Health.

**"If you want to bring in family members who may be across the country or the world, we can set up video calls to discuss the patient's care or progress."**

"How will you move patients through the system? All those things have to occur in a team-based fashion to optimize care."

## NATURE LENDS A HAND

The hospital was designed to evoke a feeling of calm and ease for patients, visitors and staff, says Josephine Jorge-Reyes, vice president of nursing for the new hospital. Each floor also includes physician on-call rooms, spacious break lounges, flexible workspaces and so-called lavender rooms where co-workers can decompress after stressful experiences.

"These lavender rooms are an important aspect of caring for our healthcare workers," Jorge-Reyes says. "The complexity of the work requires that people have the ability to take a pause."

Patients and visitors will feel the healing power of nature throughout the campus, from the marsh views to the outdoor plants, many with medicinal properties, and thoughtful outdoor gathering spaces (see page 12). Many patient rooms have views of the marsh while outdoor terraces allow patients and visitors to relax outside. Other outdoor spaces include a dining patio, meditation gardens and walkways to connect the medical campus, including Marsh Edge Trail, which incorporates native coastal sage scrub and riparian species that are also found in the wildlife refuge.



“At the start of the project, we asked, ‘How can we best utilize the marsh?’” says Gina Chang of CO Architects, the company that worked with UCI Health to develop the medical complex. “How can we ensure that patients see it, smell it, interact with it?”

Throughout the hospital, artwork was carefully chosen to feature California Impressionism-style art, primarily of soothing landscapes. Patients and visitors can also find solace in an all-faith chapel and meditation gardens.

In each space, hospital planners intentionally sought out materials free of chemicals and vapors. Its furnishings, for example, have set a new standard for hospitals, Khoudari says. Vendors

were asked to eliminate the top five most dangerous chemicals from their furniture and produce products that are easy to clean. The vendors, who were required to get a certification to meet the hospital’s safety and sustainability standards, were excited about this challenge, she says, adding that other medical centers in the state are taking note. “We were able to push the market to be more sustainable.”

#### MINDFUL TECHNOLOGY

Behind the natural lighting, serene wall art and environmentally friendly furnishings, the hospital is brimming with the latest technological innovations.

**Sustainability:** UCI Health — Irvine represents the future of sustainable architecture. It is nation’s first all-electric acute care hospital and boasts one of the all-electric acute care hospital kitchens. When it opens, the hospital is on track to be certified LEED Platinum (the highest level of sustainability certification) — the sixth U.S. hospital to do so. The hospital and its surroundings — including gardens and shaded parking structures topped by solar panels — are designed to reduce solar heat gain by 85%.

**Surgical innovation:** Planners took advantage of the megafloor design process to rethink and improve the delivery of surgical care. Digital screens in all operating rooms transform the presurgery patient safety checklist by process by displaying all relevant information front and center, including name, age, diagnosis and surgical site. The screens can also display any relevant imaging as well as calming scenes to prepare patients and team members. Software sends patient updates to visitors via monitors.

**Digital records:** The hospital will implement a “digital first” approach to recordkeeping, using the Epic electronic medical records system, says UCI Health Chief Medical Information Officer Dr. Deepti Pandita. Patients can use mobile devices to check wait times when they enter the emergency department or to access their status, including the discharge process, while hospitalized. Digital signage will also be visible outside patient rooms.

**Imaging:** MRI placement in the hospital also has been reimaged. Instead of the standard basement location, two MRIs will be located on the second floor next to the emergency room. One is a highly advanced 3T machine while a second machine integrates the latest in artificial intelligence. Normally mounted on a slab, these devices “float” via a specially made system to reduce noise and vibration.

**Interactive patient care:** The hospital will have a voice-over/internet communication platform, allowing a doctor to relay orders from their mobile device directly to nurses in the patient’s

## LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic was in full swing during the design phase of the new hospital and medical campus, deeply altering how planners approached their task, says Dr. Alpesh Amin, associate dean for Clinical Transformation. Plans were redrawn to create patient rooms large enough for potential isolation and conversion to an intensive care unit. Outdoor spaces were designed for social distancing, if needed, as well as an outdoor staging area for evaluating patients. The new hospital makes widespread use of cameras to improve communications. “We spent a lot of time thinking about how we’d be able to function during an epidemic. This hospital is built to adapt.”



The surgical megaflow features a unique sterile supply area that allows surgical carts to be stocked, double-checked and waiting for the next day's OR schedule.

room using a video call or connecting with the patient's electronic chart. "Physicians are never tied to one place," Pandita says. "They're rounding, operating, seeing patients. Having that mobile-first strategy is going to be a game changer by saving time and elevating patient care." Nurses will be able to consult with a counterpart in another location via the patient's television. Faraway family members can be summoned into a patient's room as well. "If you want to bring in family members who may be across the country or the world, we can set up video calls to discuss the patient's care or progress," she says.

#### **Telemedicine to reduce fall risk:**

The hospital will eventually have 360° ambient cameras to confidentially document clinician conversations and to help staff members identify patients at risk of falling or slipping out of bed. Other remote monitoring programs are being implemented within the hospital, including in the cardiac and epilepsy units. "We will have someone watching over a monitor in another location who can intervene over a two-way camera and speaker system if needed," says Jorge-Reyes. "It's like having another set of eyes."

#### **COMMUNITY SYNERGY**

The hospital is the third and final building to open at the medical complex, a place where coastal and south Orange County residents can meet all their healthcare needs without spending hours in traffic. The first two buildings opened last year: the Joe C. Wen & Family Center for Advanced Care and the Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center and Ambulatory Care building.

In the future, UC Irvine leaders hope to connect the university and medical campuses with a bucolic walking trail that would skirt the San Joaquin Marsh Reserve. Already, the proximity to the university is infusing the medical campus with an air of innovation, energy and optimism about the future, Da Veiga says.

"When you're on the medical campus, you can feel our philosophy of care: Discover. Teach. Heal. The teaching and discovering is happening just half a mile away, and all that will be brought to our hospital to heal our patients." ■



Discover more  
about UCI  
Health — Irvine  
at [ucihealth.org/irvinehospital](http://ucihealth.org/irvinehospital)

## **FLOOR BY FLOOR**

### **LEVEL 1 — GARDEN LEVEL**

A novel surgical megaflow extends beneath the hospital and cancer center, streamlining operations for improved quality and patient safety.

- Surgery services
- Pre-op and post-op recovery
- Family waiting area
- Blood bank

### **LEVEL 2 — PLAZA LEVEL**

- Main lobby
- Emergency department
- Imaging services
- Gift shop/outpatient pharmacy
- Café

### **LEVEL 3**

- Lab and inpatient pharmacy
- Clinical support
- All-electric kitchen

### **LEVEL 4**

- Intensive care units
- 36 patient suites

### **LEVEL 5**

- 36 patient suites for neurology, orthopedics and general surgery

### **LEVEL 6**

- 36 patient suites for cardiovascular, digestive and general medicine

### **LEVEL 7**

- Oncology and stem cell transplant
- 36 patient suites

# A Place to Rest and Heal

The hospital's patient suites are a seamless blend of nature and technology, designed for comfort for all who enter.

## ROOMY

Averaging 250 square feet, each patient room has a sleeper sofa and space for several family members to visit. It also allows caregivers to tend to patients without displacing visitors.

## GENERAL

Each room has a private bath, beds with a warming mattress and floor-to-ceiling windows, many with a marsh view.

## QUIET

Noise is kept to minimum by a quiet communication system that keeps caregivers informed and allows for immediate response to patient alarms.

## LIGHTING

Patients can control the room lighting to adjust to their natural sleep/wake cycle, promoting better rest. "When you sleep better, you heal faster," says Tony Dover, the UCI Health energy management and sustainability officer. "When you heal faster, you get out of the hospital sooner."

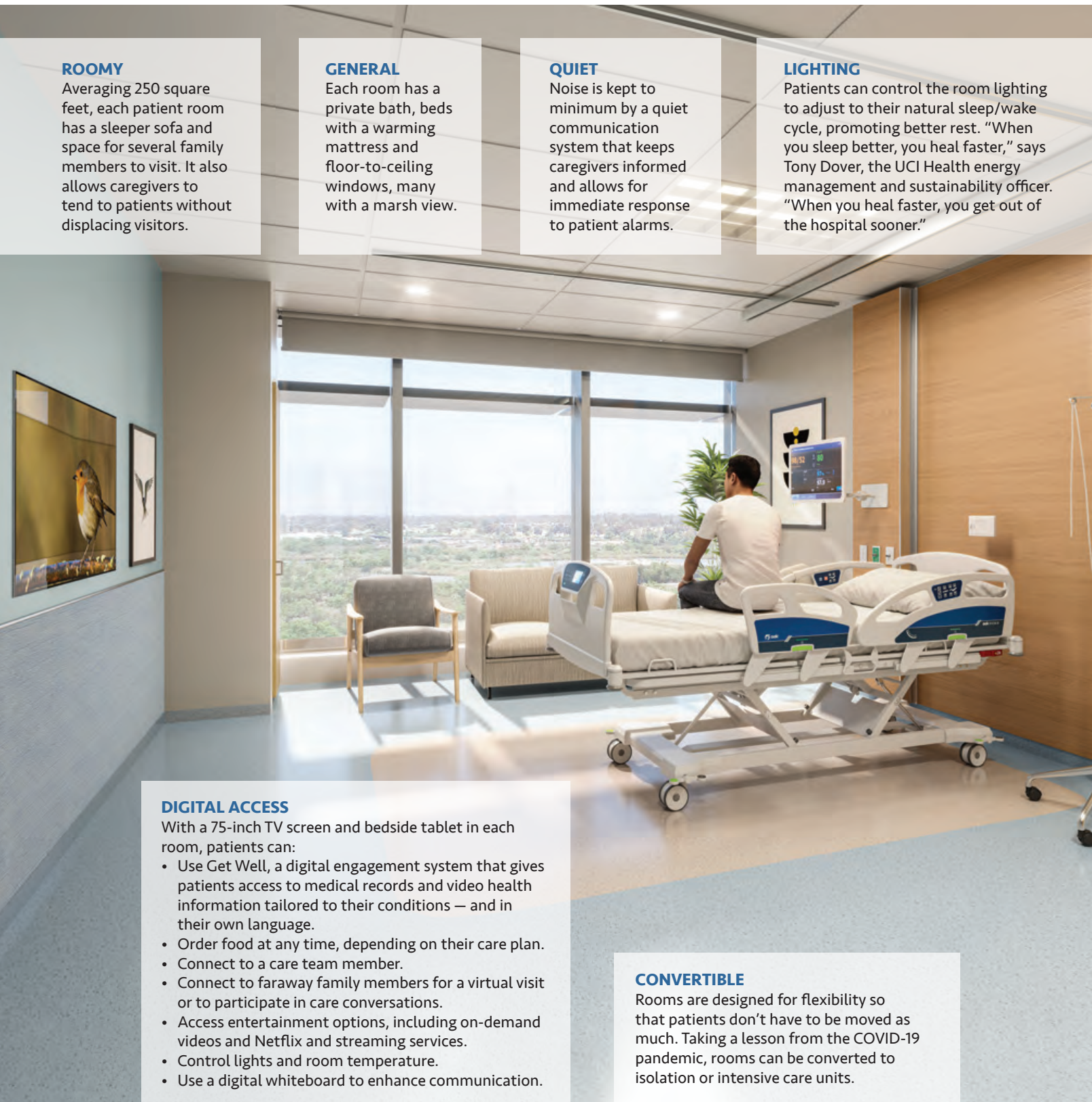
## DIGITAL ACCESS

With a 75-inch TV screen and bedside tablet in each room, patients can:

- Use Get Well, a digital engagement system that gives patients access to medical records and video health information tailored to their conditions — and in their own language.
- Order food at any time, depending on their care plan.
- Connect to a care team member.
- Connect to faraway family members for a virtual visit or to participate in care conversations.
- Access entertainment options, including on-demand videos and Netflix and streaming services.
- Control lights and room temperature.
- Use a digital whiteboard to enhance communication.

## CONVERTIBLE

Rooms are designed for flexibility so that patients don't have to be moved as much. Taking a lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic, rooms can be converted to isolation or intensive care units.





From the movable light booms and heated mattresses to air-flow systems that keep the surgical field sterile, Mara Rosalsky ensured that every OR was designed to support how nurses and surgeons actually work and to maximize patient safety.

# Rethinking Surgery

A high-tech megafloor is transforming surgical quality and efficiency as well as boosting patient safety and comfort.

WRITTEN BY NANCY BRANDS WARD  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY REMY HAYNES

Great surgical outcomes depend on talented medical professionals who work in a space created for success. The surgical floor at UCI Health — Irvine is the embodiment of that goal. The uniquely designed facility combines outpatient and inpatient procedures on a single floor equipped with the latest technologies to enhance efficiency and safety.

The garden-level surgical “megafloor”

— spanning the width of nearly three football fields beneath the soon-to-open hospital and adjacent Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center and Ambulatory Care building — will have 64 pre-op and recovery beds, 15 standard operating rooms (ORs), five interventional procedure rooms and four advanced multispecialty interventional suites for cardiac, neurological and

radiology procedures. All are designed and strategically placed for a seamless flow of patients coming from the hospital and the adjacent outpatient surgical center.

The patient entrance, pre-op and recovery spaces were built on one side of the seven-story, 144-bed hospital, where the slope of the terrain allowed ample room for tall windows and peaceful

views of a natural marsh. What patients won't see — the vast, sterile, high-tech underpinnings of the surgical megafloor — is just as wondrous.

A sterile “core” extending about half the length of the megafloor stores all supplies and instrumentation. An assembly-line coding process for stocking surgical carts ensures quality control and patient safety when they are strategically placed at the fingertips of the many surgery teams. Multiuse pre-op, post-op and recovery rooms are intentionally designed to treat any patient in any phase of care with the utmost efficiency. To avoid potential cross-contamination, no OR door faces another. A sterile zone surrounds patients in each OR for improved safety.

Planners embraced every detail. For example, single-socket electrical outlets were chosen to prevent inadvertent overloading of an outlet that could lead to an OR chief's worst nightmare: a blackout.

Throughout the planning process, UCI Health leaders and architects did the unheard of. They engaged the caregivers, themselves, to design a new hospital that supports how clinicians actually

work — instead of having to adapt to awkward spaces, says Mara Rosalsky. The nurse and UCI Health vice president of perioperative services was tapped to envision the surgical megafloor.

“It was a once-in-a-career opportunity,” she says with evident pride. “I was invited early to help select the architects. The doctors, frontline staff and clinical managers — they were all involved in every facet of the design. Every OR decision was focused on patient safety.”

Much of the conceptual work took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting planners to imagine how healthcare should be delivered in all kinds of challenging situations. “It was a chance to design something not just for now, but also for how caregivers might work in the future,” Rosalsky says.

Gina Chang of CO Architects, who helped design the hospital, credits Rosalsky with leveraging the combined knowledge of experienced doctors, nurses, technicians and other healthcare professionals to create a groundbreaking model for surgical care delivery.

“Mara's big idea was to make sterile

processing an assembly-line, high-quality control system that would serve the entire surgical operation,” Chang says. “This completely changes the healthcare model and makes surgical operations vastly more efficient.”

As the hospital opening draws near, Rosalsky has provided tours for co-workers and leadership. Their feedback has been exhilarating, she says. “They say, ‘Wow, I can't believe the thought that went into this design!’”

To prove the concept, workflows were rigorously tested and refined through computer simulations using artificial intelligence. The result is a workspace that streamlines operations, improves quality control and reduces the stress of surgery for everyone involved, she says. The design already has proven successful in the ambulatory surgery center, the first half of the megafloor, which opened in July 2024.

“It's breathtaking to see how happy patients and staff are with this facility.” ■

**Discover more unique care concepts at [ucihealth.org/irvine-medical-center](https://ucihealth.org/irvine-medical-center)**



Jon Moore, left, and Mara Rosalsky consult in the megafloor's sterile core, a vast, high-tech stockroom filled with everything needed to complete any surgical procedure.



# Inspired by Nature, Created for Healing

The seven-story hospital was designed to be a soothing place for patients, visitors and co-workers.

WRITTEN BY LAUREL DIGANGI

The terrace at the new acute care hospital is one of many restorative outdoor spaces on the Irvine medical campus.

**R**esearch has proven that exposure to nature can reduce anxiety and stress, which in turn can positively impact physical health by lowering blood pressure and heart rate. The natural setting of UCI Health — Irvine alongside the San Joaquin Marsh Reserve nurtures this powerful mind-body connection, as do the hospital's interior spaces, which are designed to be calming for patients, visitors and co-workers.

The marsh, a lush 300-acre wildlife reserve that is home to more than 200 bird species, was integrated from the start into the hospital's design to maximize the healing benefits of nature.

"We decided early on that we would not turn our back on the San Joaquin Marsh," says Paul E. Da Veiga, director of planning,

design and construction at UCI Health. "We wanted it to be part of the fabric of the entire medical campus."

## INTEGRATING NATURE

The vast plaza between the new hospital and cancer center offers quiet spaces to recharge body and mind. Stairs and ramps lead directly to the marsh's edge, where a gentle breeze can lift spirits.

Those open-air healing qualities are echoed indoors with nature-inspired artwork and a serene, yet comfortable atmosphere. Numerous pieces of world-renowned art were selected for the hospital walls, primarily California Impressionism works from the 1880s to the 1930s. Other



paintings, photographs and sculptures commissioned from regional artists represent local environments to comfort patients with familiar scenes.

Much of the artwork consists of landscapes of Southern California. "It provides a healing environment for patients," says Ellen Khoudari, senior project manager. "The first thing you'll see in our front lobby is a digital screen with pleasing, expansive images of the marsh. You'll also find art all around you that is calming. We want everyone who walks in to

take a deep breath and say, 'I'm safe here.'"

Outdoor areas are landscaped with a variety of plants in many colors, textures and forms, allowing patients, visitors and co-workers to feel nature at work. They include medicinal plant species like aloe, agave and crassula to symbolize nature's powerful role in healing.

### COMFORT FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

To enhance the mind-body connection, floor-to-ceiling windows in all patient

rooms allow natural light. The outdoor plaza also offers multiple spots for patients, their families and visitors to relax or walk.

"These are alternative healing spaces where patients can engage with family and loved ones, which is important," says Dr. Alpesh N. Amin, associate dean for Clinical Transformation for the UC Irvine School of Medicine and UCI Health.

### A QUIET HOSPITAL

The hospital's silent alarm system is intended to reduce anxiety by giving patients a quieter hospital stay. Alarm notifications will be sent directly to nurses and clinicians so that patients can rest, particularly at night.

Waiting rooms are also designed to produce a calming effect, with large windows, comfortable seating, ottomans and coffee tables. Every floor has a conference room equipped with a large kitchen area where families can congregate and have private discussions.

### CARE FOR PHYSICIANS AND STAFF

To alleviate the burnout often experienced by healthcare professionals, each patient floor has a "lavender" room. These quiet, calming spaces feature marsh views, soft lighting, comfortable seating and healing artwork for co-workers to rest, reflect and decompress.

Other areas allow clinicians to collaborate. Doctors also have lounges as well as 20 sleeping quarters.

Patients get the best care when their caregivers — their health professionals and their loved ones — are supported by a healing environment, Khoudari says.

"We want people to know that we hear them and that we are here to help them." ■

Discover how nature informed  
the medical campus design at  
[ucihealth.org/healing](https://ucihealth.org/healing)



## HEALTH CLASSES

Our classes can help improve your well-being and prevent disease. Most are free, but some do have fees. Registration is required. Classes are held online via Zoom except where noted.

Visit [ucihealth.org/events](https://ucihealth.org/events) or call 657-282-6357 for more information.

### ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

Sept. 2, Oct. 7, Nov. 4, Dec. 2 | 12:30–1:15 p.m.

### BREASTFEEDING

Sept. 4, Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 4 | 6–9 p.m.

### DIABETES OVERVIEW

Sept 24, Oct. 29, Nov. 26 | 3:30–4:30 p.m.

### HEALTHY LIVING SERIES

Sept. 9, 23; Oct. 7, 21; Nov. 4, 18; Dec. 2, 16 | English 3–4 p.m., Spanish 10–11 a.m.

Register for English classes at 714-456-7514

Register for Spanish classes at 714-456-3739

### LIVING WELL WITH HEART FAILURE

Sept. 9, Nov. 11 | 3:30–4:30 p.m.

### NEWBORN CARE

Sept. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 11 | 6–9 p.m.

### PRENATAL PELVIC FLOOR WORKSHOP

In-person: 200 S. Manchester Ave., Suite 120, Orange  
Sept. 27, Nov. 22 | 1–2 p.m.

### PREPARED CHILDBIRTH SERIES

In-person: 11190 Warner Ave., Suite 214, Fountain Valley  
Sept. 3, 10, 17, 24; Oct. 8, 15, 22, 29; Nov. 5, 12, 19, 26 | 6–8 p.m.



### PREPARING FOR SURGERY — MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT

Sept. 1, Oct. 6, Nov. 3, Dec. 1 | Noon–1 p.m.

### PLANT-BASED COOKING WORKSHOP

Dec. 12 | Noon–1 p.m.

### STROKE PREVENTION

English: Sept. 24, Nov. 26 | noon

Spanish: Sept. 23, Nov. 25 | 4–5 p.m.

Register at 866-STROKE-3 (866-787-6533)

### TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

English: Sept. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 6, Nov. 20 | 5–6:30 p.m.

Spanish: Sept. 4, Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 4 | 5–6:30 p.m.

### WEIGHT LOSS & BARIATRIC SURGERY

Sept. 16, Oct. 21, Nov. 18, Dec. 16 | 6–7 p.m.

## MEDICARE BASICS

Learn about new Medicare rules, plan changes and UCI Health offerings at one of our free virtual classes:

Sept. 4, 23; Oct. 15, 28; Nov. 5, 20 | 5–6:30 p.m.

Classes, hosted by a UCI Health representative, will cover basic Medicare, Medicare Supplemental and Medicare Advantage PPO and HMO plans. To register, call 714-456-2210. Registration is required to get the Zoom link.

 **EVENTS**

UCI Health and UC Irvine are proud to sponsor these free community events and lectures on a variety of health topics.

**UC IRVINE ANTI-CANCER CHALLENGE**

**Oct. 11 | Run, ride or walk** in the ninth annual Anti-Cancer Challenge to raise funds for vital research at the UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center. Activities begin at 6 a.m. on the UC Irvine. Activities begin at 6 a.m. at Aldrich Park on the UC Irvine campus. Visit [anti-cancerchallenge.org](http://anti-cancerchallenge.org) to learn more and join the challenge.

**MEDICINE IN OUR BACKYARD  
NEWPORT BEACH LIBRARY LECTURES**

**Sept. 22 | Understanding hearing loss and the latest treatment options** — Hamid R. Djalilian, MD

**Oct. 13 | Integrative whole-person cancer care** — Gary Deng, MD, PhD

**Nov. 17 | Age-related macular degeneration and long-term prevention** — Andrew W. Browne, MD, PhD

Presentations begin at 7 p.m. at the Newport Beach Central Library, 1000 Avocado Ave., Newport Beach. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. A Q&A follows the lecture. Register at [nbplf.foundation/programs/medicine-in-our-backyard](http://nbplf.foundation/programs/medicine-in-our-backyard)

**UCI HEALTH — LOS ALAMITOS  
COMMUNITY LECTURES**

**Sept. 11 | Hip and knee replacement surgery in 2025** — Armin Arshi, MD

**Oct. 16 | Updates in radiation oncology** — Liam Ghiam, MD, director of Radiation Oncology Services at the Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center in Los Alamitos

Presentations begin at 9:30 a.m. at Rush Park Auditorium, 3001 Blume Drive, Rossmore. Registration is required. Call 844-676-3790 to register.

**UCI HEALTH — PLACENTIA LINDA  
COMMUNITY LECTURES**

**Sept. 10 | Back pain: When is spine surgery needed?** — Michael Oh, MD, UCI Health Comprehensive Spine Center co-director.

**Oct. 8 | Updates in glaucoma care** — Austin R. Fox, MD

Presentations begin at 6 p.m. at the Yorba Linda Public Library Community Room, 4852 Lakeview Ave., Yorba Linda. Registration is required. Visit [ucihealth.org/events](http://ucihealth.org/events) or email [cturmala@hs.uci.edu](mailto:cturmala@hs.uci.edu) for more information.

**GAVIN HERBERT EYE INSTITUTE  
COMMUNITY LECTURES**

**Sept. 2 | Stem-cell therapy and age-related macular degeneration** — Henry Klassen, MD, PhD, and Kapil Mishra, MD

**Oct. 7 | What you need to know about myopia in children** — Charlotte Gore, MD

**Nov. 4 | Treating diabetic eye disease** — Kapil Mishra, MD, and Mehboob Hussain, MD

Visit [ophthalmology.uci.edu/events](http://ophthalmology.uci.edu/events) to register for these online lectures, which begin at 7 p.m. Email [ghei@uci.edu](mailto:ghei@uci.edu) or call 949-824-7243 to learn more.

**SUE & BILL GROSS STEM CELL  
RESEARCH CENTER COMMUNITY  
LECTURES**

**Sept. 8 | From petri dish to patients: Engineering stem cells for clinical use** — Quinton Smith, PhD, and Michael Hicks, PhD

**Oct. 7 | What's new in research and treatment for vulvar skin disease?** — Christina Kraus, MD, and Xing Dai, PhD

Presentations begin at 7 p.m. in Gross Hall, 845 Health Sciences Road, Irvine. To register, email [stemcell@uci.edu](mailto:stemcell@uci.edu) or call 949-824-3990.

 **SUPPORT GROUPS**

To learn more about our support groups, call or email the contacts listed below or visit [ucihealth.org/events](http://ucihealth.org/events).



**ADVANCED HEART FAILURE & VAD**  
714-456-7514

**BARIATRIC SUPPORT GROUP**  
[alisont3@hs.uci.edu](mailto:alisont3@hs.uci.edu)

**BURN SURVIVORS**  
714-456-7437

**CANCER NUTRITION**  
[agebhar1@hs.uci.edu](mailto:agebhar1@hs.uci.edu)

**CHRONIC LYMPHOCYTIC LEUKEMIA**  
[tevans@cllsociety.org](mailto:tevans@cllsociety.org)

**DEMENTIA CAREGIVERS**  
949-814-4793

**DIABETES SUPPORT GROUP**  
[tiv4@hs.uci.edu](mailto:tiv4@hs.uci.edu)

**FACIAL PAIN ASSOCIATION**  
[octnafpa@yahoo.com](mailto:octnafpa@yahoo.com)

**INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE**  
714-456-7057

**KOREAN WOMEN'S CANCER  
SUPPORT GROUP**  
714-875-4658

**MASTECTOMY SUPPORT GROUP**  
949-518-5124 or [vbassili@hs.uci.edu](mailto:vbassili@hs.uci.edu)

**MEN'S CANCER SUPPORT GROUP**  
714-456-5812

**MULTIPLE MYELOMA**  
800-452-2873, ext. 233

**NEW MOTHER SUPPORT GROUP**  
855-226-3744

**OSTOMY ASSOCIATION OF  
ORANGE COUNTY**  
714-637-7971

**PANCREATIC CANCER**  
949-814-4784

**PARKINSON'S DISEASE**  
[blagasse@hs.uci.edu](mailto:blagasse@hs.uci.edu)

**STEM CELL TRANSPLANT**  
714-335-8439

**STROKE SUPPORT GROUP**  
866-STROKE-3 (866-787-6533)

**TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY**  
[traumainjuryprevention@hs.uci.edu](mailto:traumainjuryprevention@hs.uci.edu)

**YOUNG ADULT CANCER**  
[caps@hs.uci.edu](mailto:caps@hs.uci.edu)



PHOTO BY MICHAEL NEVEUX

Dr. Ryan Gibney knows well how to calmly handle the most challenging situations.

## A MISSION TO SERVE

ED doctor honed people skills as a bar manager.

In early adulthood, Dr. Ryan Gibney explored careers in music and the restaurant business, but he always dreamed of being a doctor, too. The desire to serve others, evident in his work as a bartender and restaurant manager, has led him to the doorstep of UCI Health — Irvine, the soon-to-open new hospital where he'll be the emergency department (ED) medical director after 10 years working in the UCI Health ED in Orange. Born in Arizona, Gibney moved to Orange County after high school. He earned his undergraduate and medical degrees at UC Irvine, where he completed a residency in emergency medicine. He now lives in Costa Mesa with his wife, daughter and two golden retrievers.

There's a photo of me in scrubs when I was 5. I always wanted to go into medicine but I took a couple of detours on the way to getting my degree. I also loved creating music and started playing guitar when I was very young, emulating my dad. I still play every day. While exploring a music career, I had jobs in the restaurant industry, including 14 years at Baja Sharkeez in Newport Beach, where I became assistant general manager and learned both the public-facing and corporate sides of the business. I still rely on the skills I acquired there.

Healthcare, like the restaurant business, is rooted in service. It's about taking time to understand and anticipate needs, to work with your team to deliver excellent results. It only takes five minutes to talk with someone and find out how they're doing, which can make all the difference in the world.

I chose emergency medicine because I like to think and act quickly, to see the results of my actions. A mentor told me that while lots of medical specialties could make me happy, finding my people would show me the path. The first time I worked in the ED in Orange, I realized I'd found them. We think alike, our personalities are complementary — it's home.

Emergency medicine reminds me of working in busy restaurants. There are times when only a few people are around and it's very peaceful. The next minute, 50 people are waiting to be served. It's striking to realize how similar an ED can be.

Leading the new ED in Irvine is a once-in-a-career opportunity to help develop the new hospital and our department from the ground up. As we prepare to open the doors, we are examining every process to do things even better, to provide care in novel ways. EDs are often dark and closed off, but our patients in Irvine will see a bright architectural showcase. It will have state-of-the-art monitoring systems and integrated technologies to help make everything we do virtually seamless.

I want everyone in this ED, regardless of their role, to feel engaged and empowered to help in whatever way they can. We're all responsible for anticipating patients' needs and enhancing each person's experience. I know that each member of our Irvine team will bring their expertise and deliver the best healthcare possible.

— Dr. Ryan Gibney

Discover more about UCI Health emergency services at [ucihealth.org/emergency](https://ucihealth.org/emergency)



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# RIDE, RUN OR WALK

## TOGETHER AGAINST CANCER!

On Saturday, Oct. 11, enjoy a 5K run/walk, various road bike routes or a mountain bike route with your community at the UC Irvine campus. Every participant-raised dollar supports critical cancer research at the UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center aimed at advancing prevention efforts, innovative treatments and potential cures that save lives.

**Register today at [anti-cancerchallenge.org](https://anti-cancerchallenge.org)**

**UC Irvine**  
Anti-Cancer Challenge

