

health  
happens  
here



In Neighborhoods

BUILDING A **HEALTHY** SACRAMENTO

# World-class Care, For Some

## Decision to reject Medi-Cal patients impacts community

BY KATE GONZALES

**U**C Davis Medical Center is renowned for providing the best care in the region, but since 2015, Californians covered through Medi-Cal have not had access to that care.

In January 2015, the center ended its last contract with a Medi-Cal managed care plan. Medi-Cal managed care plans coordinate medical services for over 436,000 Sacramento County residents enrolled in the state's Medicaid system that helps pay for health coverage for low-income individuals and families, as well as those with disabilities.

Randy Nash is one of them. Nash was stabbed in 1975, leaving him paralyzed and in a wheelchair. He was a patient at UC Davis Medical Center until last year, when he received a notice telling him he would need to find care elsewhere. Nash says getting referrals and prescriptions for his pain medicine has been difficult since then. He's had poor treatment in other hospitals and had come to trust the doctors and nurses at UC Davis Medical Center — his medical home for 40 years.

He says forging new relationships and getting the care he needs since he left UC Davis has been stressful.

"In the long run, I'd say it's going to cost a lot more if I end up back in the hospital than it would if I was being still seen at UCD," he says.

While some hospitals, clinics and doctor's offices limit the number of Medi-Cal patients they accept, it's rare to completely reject them

for primary care, says Amy Williams, deputy director of Legal Services of Northern California. She says it came at an unfortunate time.

"UC Davis Medical Center doesn't provide any primary care services to anyone who is on Medi-Cal, which, in a post-Affordable Care Act world, is quite a few people," she says. "[We had] a big provider drop out of the system absolutely at the wrong time."

**"IN THE LONG RUN, I'D SAY IT'S GOING TO COST A LOT MORE IF I END UP BACK IN THE HOSPITAL THAN IT WOULD IF I WAS BEING STILL SEEN AT UCD."**

Randy Nash, Former UC Davis Medical Center patient

Williams says this surge can lead to a more heavily burdened local health care landscape, with other area hospitals and doctor's offices having to pick up the slack.

In late 2015, UC Davis medical resident students reached out to the Building Healthy Communities Health Access Action Team, which Williams co-chairs, to express concern that the hospital no longer served the region's low-income and vulnerable patients. The Health Access Action Team, a coalition that



Randy Nash received care at UC Davis Medical Center from 1975 until 2015, when the provider stopped accepting Medi-Cal patients. He has struggled to find quality care in other settings. Photo by Melissa Uroff.

includes residents and community-based organizations that receive funding from The California Endowment, organized community meetings to get input from South Sacramento residents. They wrote a letter to hospital administrators outlining community concerns, which included the difficulty patients can have in building new relationships with providers that accept Medi-Cal.

"Once our patients find a good system of care that's set up and understands them, they want to stay there," Williams says.

### BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.

ZIP CODE  
**95219**  
Life Expectancy  
**73**



ZIP CODE  
**92657**  
Life Expectancy  
**88**

Your **ZIP code** shouldn't predict how long you'll live — but it does. Staying healthy requires much more than doctors and diets. Every day, our surroundings and activities affect how long — and how well — we'll live.

Health Happens in Neighborhoods. Health Happens in Schools.  
Health Happens with Prevention.

To read or add your name  
to the letter of concerned  
community organizations,  
student groups and individuals,  
visit [bit.ly/28qm2zc](http://bit.ly/28qm2zc)

The  
**HUB**  
Building Healthy Communities  
[www.SacBHC.org](http://www.SacBHC.org)

PAID WITH A GRANT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT