



UCSF Fresno
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UCSF Fresno begins training gastroenterologists for the San Joaquin Valley

FRESNO – As of July 1, 2009, UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program added another fellowship to its portfolio of training programs - bringing the total number of fellowships offered in Fresno to eight. Fellowships offer specific training in an area of expertise beyond residency training and generally last two to three years. The latest UCSF Fresno sub-specialty training program is in gastroenterology (GI).

Gastroenterology and hepatology are branches of internal medicine that involve prevention, investigation, therapy of and research into illnesses related to the intestine, liver, gall bladder and pancreas.

There are about a dozen or so adult gastroenterology fellowship programs in California. UCSF Fresno is the only site for training future gastroenterologists between Los Angeles and Sacramento and the Bay Area.

“UCSF Fresno is now providing state-of-the-art patient care in gastrointestinal and liver disease,” said Muhammad Sheikh, MD, associate professor of clinical medicine and program director of the GI Fellowship at UCSF Fresno. “It’s no longer necessary for area residents to travel long distances and stay overnight away from home to undergo specialized procedures.”

The UCSF Fresno GI fellowship is a three-year program with two new fellows selected each year. Rahim Raoufi, MD, and Ranjan Mascarenhas, MD, were selected as UCSF Fresno’s first GI fellows. Raoufi completed residency training in internal medicine at UCSF Fresno. Mascarenhas most recently completed a transplant hepatology fellowship at Johns Hopkins University.

UCSF Fresno GI fellows will gain broad experience in the management of patients with a wide variety of gastrointestinal disorders, gastrointestinal endoscopic procedures, liver biopsies, gastrointestinal and hepatic imaging, pathology and physiological investigations, clinical nutrition, and gastrointestinal surgery. The bulk of their training will take place at Community Regional Medical Center and VA Central California Health Care System in Fresno. In addition, two months of training in transplant hepatology will be offered to each fellow at the University of California, San Francisco.

Drs. Raoufi and Mascarenhas were selected through an interview process following a nationwide search conducted by direct communication with hundreds of program directors of internal medicine. The second cohort of fellows will be selected through the National Resident Matching Program, which is a private, not-for-profit corporation that matches applicants with graduate medical education programs based on the preferences of each.

“The new GI Fellowship enhances the UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program and importantly, will help increase the number of gastroenterologists practicing in our medically underserved Valley,” said Michael Peterson, MD, chief of medicine and chair of internal medicine at UCSF Fresno.

“As a nation, we are facing a shortage of gastroenterologists,” added Peterson. “We must increase the number of specialists practicing in this field to care for our aging population and to provide adequate diagnosis and treatment for related illnesses such as colorectal cancer, which is the second leading cause of death in the U.S.”

It was Peterson’s idea to create the GI Fellowship Program. With the guidance of Ivy Darden, MD, program director of internal medicine at UCSF Fresno, Sheikh was instrumental in establishing the new program and securing its full accreditation.

“Developing a new fellowship is a significant endeavor,” said Joan Voris, MD, associate dean at UCSF Fresno. “I applaud Drs. Peterson, Sheikh and Darden for their vision and hard work in establishing the GI Fellowship and I thank Community Medical Centers and VA Central California Health Care System for their contributions to making the program possible.”

UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program plays a substantial role in providing healthcare services to residents of California's San Joaquin Valley and training medical professionals in the region. The medical education program has trained approximately one-third of Valley physicians currently practicing in one of the seven specialties in which it provides training. Since its inception nearly 35 years ago, UCSF Fresno has graduated more than 2,000 resident physicians. UCSF Fresno faculty and medical residents care for the overwhelming majority of the area's underserved populations. The program currently trains about 200 medical residents, roughly 200 medical students and approximately 20 fellows in eight sub-specialties each year. UCSF Fresno also provides academic preparation programs for middle- and high-school students interested in the health professions through the Doctors Academy and Junior Doctors Academy. UCSF Fresno is a key partner in the proposed UC Merced School of Medicine and is expected to play a significant role in the training of medical students at the planned school.

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