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Medical Society Foundation Wins Statewide Award

The San Diego County Medical Society Foundation (SDCMSF) was awarded the 2011 Adarsh S. Mahal, MD Access to Health Care & Disparities Award at the California Medical Association (CMA) Annual Conference and CMA Foundation dinner on Sunday, October 16 for their work in addressing the unmet health care needs of uninsured patients throughout San Diego County.

Through its flagship program, Project Access San Diego, the Foundation has assisted over 1,200 uninsured patients to receive specialty medical care through its network of volunteer physicians, hospitals, surgery centers, and other ancillary health services since the program's initiation in 2009. Project Access patients are low-income adults who have no access to private health insurance through their employers, and are not eligible for public health benefits such as MediCal or CMS.

Of San Diego's 3.2 million residents, approximately 415,000 non-elderly adults are uninsured, and seek primary health care at one of the area's 90 community health clinic sites; these clinics are most often unable to provide access to specialty care except through Project Access San Diego. Extremely limited access to specialty care has been identified by the County of San Diego as a major challenge in the community.

SDCMS Foundation addresses these needs through a proven model including case management, which benefits the specialty physician, primary care provider and patient. "Our volunteer physicians are thrilled to be able to give back to the community, know there is thorough follow-up with the patient's medical home, and feel supported in their efforts," says Stuart Cohen, MD, SDCMSF Board President. "We appreciate the recognition of CMA with this prestigious honor."

James T. Hay, MD, incoming CMA President, founded Project Access San Diego in 2008 as the SDCMSF President at that time, based on his research of similar programs throughout the country. There are currently 50 access programs in the nation, each with a slightly different operational model. Currently, 585 volunteer physicians, nine hospital systems and 11 surgery centers provide care and donated services totaling more than \$3 million to date.

The San Diego County Medical Society Foundation was founded by the San Diego County Medical Society in 2005 to address the unmet healthcare needs of uninsured and underinsured San Diego County residents. Through its flagship program, Project Access San Diego, SDCMSF has assisted over 1,200 patients to date to access specialty healthcare services. Healthcare partners, including over 585 specialty medical physicians, 25 hospitals and surgery centers, and numerous imaging, laboratory and ancillary providers, have provided patients with more than \$3.5 million in donated healthcare services. The Foundation focuses on increasing healthcare access, improving health education and prevention, and supporting physicians and medical students to improve the quality of care in our community.

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