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Numbers of Medically Uninsured in Region Exceeds 80,000
HARC Data Shows Access to Care Remains Elusive for Many

(PALM DESERT, CA) – As the national debate rages on in Washington D.C. over how to increase access to quality health care, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) has released statistics here at home that highlight the severity of the issue.

Among the most eye-popping numbers: Approximately 80,950 adults in the region (14.8% of those over age 18) indicated that they did not have health insurance of any kind. Another 34,881 adults reported they were without health insurance at some point during the year -- representing an additional 7.4% of the population.

The survey found that the lack of health insurance disproportionately impacts the Hispanic/Latino population, younger adults, and lower-income individuals. Nearly 30% of adults aged 18-24 are uninsured, as well as more than one third (34.1%) of adults with annual incomes beneath \$25,000. And Hispanic/Latino adults are nearly five times more likely to go without coverage than Whites (33.2% versus 6.9%).

The numbers come from HARC's landmark 2007 *Community Health Monitor*, the region's largest and most comprehensive snapshot of local health issues and needs. The triennial survey will take place again next year.

HARC research also shows that many of the uninsured here suffer from serious health issues. For example, approximately 13.4% said a doctor, nurse, or other health

care professional examined them and found high cholesterol levels, and 18.5% were told they had high blood pressure (roughly 10,847 and 14,975 people respectively, based on population estimates). Among other major health concerns affecting the uninsured: arthritis (12.1%), asthma (10.1%), cancer (3.1%), and diabetes (4.6%), to name a few. Obviously, a lack of comprehensive medical care presents a major difficulty for anyone suffering from these diseases.

Dr. Glen Grayman, President of the HARC Board of Directors and long-time Coachella Valley medical practitioner, said, “The data validates what the professional healthcare community has suspected for some time: We have a yawning gap in the Valley and adjoining areas when it comes to insured care. Those without coverage are at much greater risk due to less preventative and therapeutic care. They are also far more likely to be diagnosed at advanced disease stages, if diagnosed at all, which compounds the problem.”

HARC’s *Community Health Monitor* contains data from more than 3500 completed household surveys conducted throughout Eastern Riverside County. Respondents fielded questions related to health status, behavioral risks, quality of life issues, access, and utilization of services.

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About HARC

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 30 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in eastern Riverside County every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501(c)3 organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities who contract with the agency for customized public health research. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760)404-1945, or visiting the organization’s website at www.harcddata.org.