

Valley Voice: Health Assessment Resource Center survey an asset to hospitals

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JFK Memorial Hospital is a proud partner of the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) and supports its 2013 update efforts. JFK has been involved with HARC since its inception in 2006, through board of director representation as well as financial commitment.

As a hospital, we recognize the value HARC plays in providing objective, reliable research regarding the health of the Coachella Valley communities.

Prior to HARC, several nonprofit organizations frequently called upon the local hospitals for help to support their causes. The requested data would help the organizations make a case for grant funding, develop targeted programs and prioritize health needs in the community. It was sometimes a difficult task to provide the requested data, as each request was in a different format or not tracked the way they needed it or was confidential in nature to protect patients' rights.

Also, the time element involved was often onerous, as hospitals usually do not have the resources for an extensive number of requests from outside groups. When the concept of HARC was developed, JFK was eager to support it, knowing that the data gathered would represent the entire valley and not just our patient base, and that organizations would have a consistent resource to utilize as they sought data to support their programs.

JFK Memorial Hospital also benefits from the work of HARC and uses its findings. JFK engages a third-party company to perform an annual physician needs assessment as part of our annual strategic business planning process. This assessment determines the number of physicians needed by specialty in our community as we plan for the future.

We combine the physician needs analysis with HARC data to gauge the demand based on the health status of our population. Once we identify the needed physician specialties, we also can use HARC data to focus and prioritize our program development to address the shortfalls in our community.

HARC data have also been used by JFK for physician recruiting purposes — from a candidate's perspective. We've shared hard copies and the website with prospective physicians as they assess our service area and make decisions about opening a practice, joining a group and moving to the Coachella Valley. We are able to brag about several elements of our valley's health status that are favorable, indicating there is access to care in many specialties. And, HARC's data help support our recruiting efforts by allowing the physician to review the study, assessing the demographic information, and analyze how their expertise can help address the opportunities for improvement we are presenting to them.

HARC is a great partner in health for JFK and for the communities we serve. As it is gathering its information for the 2013 update, please take the time to talk with them and answer their questions. Kent State University, a contractor working with HARC, began calls to Coachella Valley residents in January. These calls will continue through April. Each telephone survey takes approximately 23 minutes to complete.

The survey covers important aspects of health and wellness, such as access to health care, chronic illness, mental health, preventative screenings and health behaviors, among others. By also assessing demographic information, HARC is able to determine not only health needs, but also health disparities between groups.

I encourage you to participate. Your participation will help HARC and help shape the health status of our

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community.

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