

New UCLA Center to Work with U.S. Military on Challenges of Healing Wounded Warriors

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UCLA has launched the first university-based military medicine center on the West Coast, thanks to a generous donation from two sons in honor their father, the inventor, entrepreneur and philanthropist Ronald A. Katz.

The Ronald A. Katz Center for Collaborative Military Medicine at UCLA, established by an initial \$2 million gift from Todd and Randy Katz and their families, will work with the U.S. military to address the unique challenges of healing and caring for the nation's most critically wounded warriors.

By serving as a nexus for UCLA's many research projects and services designed to help America's servicemen and servicewomen, the center will help foster collaborations and partnerships both within the university and between UCLA and the military to increase our nation's ability to care for wounded veterans.

The center will function as a clearinghouse for all military medical needs, a one-stop shop providing access to medical care and support programs and research, including:

- UCLA's Operation Mend
- Mild traumatic brain injury evaluation, treatment and research
- Post-traumatic stress evaluation, treatment and research
- Regenerative medicine research
- Wearable medical device research
- Family resiliency support

When it comes to supporting U.S. military personnel grievously wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, Ronald A. Katz has a lot to show. Thanks to his vision and generosity in spearheading the founding of UCLA's Operation Mend — a partnership among Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, Brooke Army Medical Center in Texas and the Veterans Affairs Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System — nearly 100 severely injured warriors and their families have been helped.

Among the beneficiaries of the program's reconstructive surgery and other medical services are an Army specialist who regained his confidence and ability to pronounce his own name and who has reentered the world with energy and enthusiasm; a brave Army captain with severe burns to his face and hands who once again can throw a ball with his kids, coach their teams, participate in the sports he loves and open his mouth wide enough to eat his favorite foods (and who has started a new company that is thriving); and a severely disfigured Marine staff sergeant who is now recognizable to his four children and can walk down the street without inviting the stares of strangers.

Servicemen and servicewomen across all five branches of the military are being cared for by Operation Mend, and in addition to reconstructive services, many are finally receiving much needed diagnoses and treatments for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress.

Now, with their gift, Todd and Randy Katz have expanded on their father's vision. The new Katz Center, conceived by the sons as a meaningful way to honor Ronald A. Katz's passion, will give America's wounded warriors and the military an institution dedicated to solving their specific medical issues.

“This is a magnificent gift in honor of a magnificent supporter, Ronald A. Katz, who shares UCLA’s deep appreciation and dedication to the men and women who serve our country,” said UCLA Chancellor Gene Block. “As a public institution, public service is in our DNA and is one of my priorities as chancellor. That’s why last year I launched a yearlong effort to not only help raise awareness about the many programs and services at UCLA that benefit veterans but also to increase understanding of the challenges faced by veterans returning to civilian life. The Katz Center for Collaborative Military Medicine will seek to enhance our resources for veterans in every area. We are very proud to further our partnership with Ron Katz so that we can better serve all those who so selflessly serve our nation.”

The new center, which will reside within the UCLA Health System and the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, will be led by its first appointed executive director, Peter Chiarelli, the retired four-star general who served as the 32nd vice chief of staff of the U.S. Army, from August 2008 through January 2012. Gen. Chiarelli brings a wealth of experience and respect as a nationally recognized leader in military service.

“Gen. Chiarelli has been passionate about the responsibility of caring for our servicemen and servicewomen,” said Todd and Randy Katz. “He is a truly respected and distinguished leader with the ability to help this new Center be as effective as possible at the highest levels of our military.”

UCLA’s dedication to veterans’ issues, which dates back generations, includes a partnership with the U.S. Veterans Administration (now Veterans Affairs) that began at the end of World War II. Today, 400 UCLA faculty members and 350 medical students care for more than 3,000 veterans each year in nearly every medical discipline. In addition to programs like Operation Mend, UCLA is home to the Nathanson Family Resilience Center, which conducts research and provides support to military families facing deployment and reintegration, and the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans With Disabilities, which offers free training in small-business management for disabled veterans through UCLA’s Anderson School of Management. In addition, the director of UCLA’s Brain Injury Research Center, David Hovda, was recently honored by the U.S. Army for his breakthrough research, which has improved the diagnosis and treatment of traumatic brain injuries on the battlefield.

“UCLA, as an institution, takes great pride in its support and clinical care for injured service members and veterans, along with its continuing research and innovation in the interdisciplinary areas of battlefield technology, health care, bioengineering and telecommunication,” Ronald A. Katz said. The lessons learned through such services, he added, have universal application. “Military conflicts historically have presented unique challenges in medical care that have driven endeavors with lifesaving results for military patients and, ultimately, great progress in civilian medicine as well.”

The Katz Center will facilitate the cross-disciplinary sharing of technologies and medical advances, both within UCLA and throughout the national network of military medicine facilities and other academic medical institutions. It will focus on enhancing treatment protocols for craniofacial reconstruction, burn repair, limb reconstruction, hand and face transplantation, traumatic brain injury and other critical areas prioritized by the military. At the same time, the center will remain dedicated to the core areas of specialized clinical care that have helped UCLA earn the trust of and establish a close working relationship with the U.S. military and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, particularly through proven, existing programs like Operation Mend and UCLA’s Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS).

“The Ronald A. Katz Center for Collaborative Military Medicine at UCLA will address the unique clinical challenges posed by battlefield trauma and enhance the standard of care within military medicine through a dedicated and focused partnership among the various branches of the U.S. military, UCLA Health System and the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA,” Chiarelli said. “This new center will leverage and maximize the university’s brain trust of knowledge, experience, innovation and entrepreneurial spirit to address and tackle the challenges of military medicine. The ultimate goal of these collaborative relationships is to move medical advances from bench to bedside as quickly as possible for the clinical care of wounded warriors through programs such as Operation Mend.”

The Katz Center builds on Ronald A. Katz’s long and successful history of forging partnerships between the private sector and the U.S. military. Katz, a Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center board member, was already a

supporter of Fisher House — a non-UCLA program providing a “home away from home” that allows military families to be close to loved ones during hospitalizations — when he and his late wife, Maddie, donated \$1 million to launch Operation Mend in 2007.

Since then, Operation Mend has grown exponentially and expanded beyond reconstructive surgery to include other special services at UCLA, including traumatic brain injury diagnostics and treatment, mental health support for military members and their families, orthopedic reconstruction for severely damaged limbs, urologic treatment, otolaryngological care, the examination and treatment of reproductive issues, repair of airways, and the design of new prosthetic ears. The services provided are free of charge to qualified patients.

“In addition to Operation Mend, Mr. Katz paved the way for a collaborative project between UCLA’s Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center that includes a number of components, from research in the basic sciences to participation by military personnel in clinical trials originated by the Jonsson Center,” said Dr. Judith Gasson, director of the Jonsson Center and senior associate dean for research at the Geffen School of Medicine.

For his philanthropic efforts and his outstanding support for wounded military members, Katz was honored with the 2009 Secretary of the Army Public Service Award. He received the Antonio Villaraigosa Patron of Science Award from the UCLA Brain Injury Research Center that same year in recognition of his leadership in the care of veterans returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. In 2010, he received the U.S. Army’s Strength of the Nation award. In 2011, he was awarded the Department of the Navy’s Distinguished Public Service Award by the Secretary of the Navy.

“It is a privilege for UCLA to assist our country’s men and women in the military, and we salute the pioneering role played by visionaries such as Ron Katz,” said Dr. David T. Feinberg, president of UCLA Health System and CEO of the UCLA Hospital System. “UCLA’s work in these endeavors not only addresses the immediate needs of U.S. service personnel and veterans but promotes the core mission of UCLA to develop and deliver the most advanced care possible to injured people throughout the world.”

SOURCE University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Health Sciences