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Riverside County Chief of Disease Control Honored with Prestigious Award from National Association

RIVERSIDE, CA (Oct. 30, 2024) – Riverside University Health System – Public Health’s Disease Control Chief Barbara Cole was recently awarded the prestigious Sedgwick Memorial Medal for Distinguished Service in Public Health by the [American Public Health Association](#) (APHA).

The [Sedgwick Memorial Medal for Distinguished Service in Public Health](#) is the oldest and most prestigious award that APHA bestows, for which only one person in the nation is selected each year.

Cole accepted the honor for her excellence in public health leadership and innovation during a ceremony at the 2024 APHA Annual Meeting and Expo in Minneapolis, Minn., on Oct. 28.

“Barbara Cole has positively impacted millions of lives over her 40-year career through her commitment to leadership, mentorship and advocacy for disease prevention,” said Kim Saruwatari, Riverside University Health System – Public Health Director. “This award is a tremendous accolade in the profession, and Barbara is truly deserving of the honor for her exceptional service and dedication to public health.”

Cole was recognized for her holistic approach to disease control, which includes targeted treatment and helping affected families get the resources they need to financially survive long-term infections such as tuberculosis (TB).

She has played a key role in addressing emerging public health threats in Riverside County, including SARS, the H1N1 pandemic, Ebola, the COVID-19 pandemic and H5N1. Cole has also worked on TB infection control in correctional facilities and TB outbreaks on the U.S. - Mexico border as Chair of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Council for the Elimination of Tuberculosis.

Cole’s influence extends beyond Riverside County, as she has mentored the next generation of public health leaders and actively collaborated with community partners to improve health outcomes across California and the United States.

For more information about disease control in Riverside County, please visit ruhealth.org.

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About Riverside University Health System – Public Health

Riverside University Health System – Public Health (RUHS - PH) serves as Riverside County's public health department. RUHS-PH offers a range of services and programs to promote and protect the health of all county residents and visitors in service of the well-being of the community. RUHS includes the 439-bed Medical Center in Moreno Valley, Calif., 14 Community Health Centers across Riverside County, and Behavioral Health, which provides emergency and inpatient psychiatric care. Visit www.ruhealth.org to learn more.