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Legislators Shift Family Planning Funds from Specialized Family Planning Clinics to Primary Care but Physicians May Not Be Ready

AUSTIN, Texas (October 28, 2015) — Survey research has shown that most Texas family physicians (79%) were not aware of recent changes to the state family planning budget, and 65% had not heard of funding structures such as the Texas Women’s Health Program (TWHP) that direct family planning funds to primary healthcare providers offering care to low-income Texas women. Provision of contraception among this sample of Texas family physicians varied, with very few offering the most effective methods for preventing unwanted pregnancies such as intrauterine devices (IUDs) or the contraceptive implant (18% and 11%, respectively).

The sample of Texas family physicians who completed the survey also desired further training in providing comprehensive family planning care. Among those not already proficient, 70% desired further education on evidence-based provision of contraception. In addition, 40% desired training to provide the contraceptive implant, and 32% desired training in IUD insertion.

Provision of comprehensive contraception is likely a new role for many of these physicians who were previously able to refer patients to specialized family planning clinics such as Planned Parenthood that have either been cut off from state funds or closed due to funding restrictions. As Texas legislators discuss the future of family planning funding, these data should be taken into consideration.

The current budget restructuring has likely resulted in confusion and complexity for patients accessing family planning care. Legislators at the state and national level should be cautious when considering defunding specialized family planning clinics without first assessing the readiness of an alternate workforce such as community health centers and primary care physicians and allow for a more gradual transition of services so that patients can receive the care they need during this period. Addressing the gaps in physician training through government funding and helping primary care physicians

access available funds for patient care could also help more Texans access vital primary care such as family planning services.

For the full research report, see the email attachment or the TxPEP website:

http://www.utexas.edu/cola/txpep/files/pdf/TexasFamilyPhysiciansAndFamilyPlanningKumar_ResearchBrief_June2015.pdf

To find more details on the study, see the Texas Academy of Family Physicians website:

<http://www.tafp.org/blog/15.7.14/family-planning-survey#sthash.3wHC0LqC.dpuf>

About TxPEP

The [Texas Policy Evaluation Project](#) (TxPEP) is a five-year, comprehensive effort to document and analyze the impact of the measures affecting reproductive health passed by the 82nd and 83rd Texas Legislatures. The project team includes researchers from the University of Texas at Austin's Population Research Center, Ibis Reproductive Health, the University of California San Francisco, and the University of Alabama-Birmingham.

Bhavik Kumar, MD, MPH completed medical school at Texas Tech HSC in Lubbock and residency in family and social medicine at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, NY. He completed the Fellowship in Family Planning at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and currently lives and practices in Texas.

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If you would like to receive more information about this topic or schedule an interview with Dr. Kumar, please contact him directly at texasfamilyphysicians@gmail.com.