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Determinants of Medical Specialty and Practice Location Choice Impact Primary Care and Reproductive Health in Louisiana

Policymakers, public health officials, and grassroots activists have expressed significant concern regarding the lack of primary care providers and access to reproductive healthcare in rural areas. This shortage of health care providers has significant impacts on patient care, including increased wait times and reduced access to care. Louisiana ranks low in overall health, and these physician shortages contribute to the low ranking. Although state officials and policymakers have expressed concerns and developed programs to encourage students into primary care specialties, the root cause of this shortage in Louisiana remains unclear. Further study is needed to determine the cause of these disparities and to create programs that will address the issue. This study aims to identify the factors impacting future physicians' decisions about where to practice medicine and what field to specialize in. In doing so, we will further define the implications of these decisions on access to reproductive and primary care for Louisiana residents.

A mixed-method survey, meaning the survey had both quantitative and qualitative questions, was developed for this study. As part of the pilot to test the efficacy of the survey questions, the survey was administered to 5 third/fourth year students at LSU School of Medicine New Orleans and (TBD) Obstetrics/Gynecology (OBGYN) residents. One hundred and thirty third/fourth year LSU medical students and (TBD) LSU OBGYN residents will complete the survey during full-scale implementation. Following the survey, participants will have the choice to opt into an interview or focus group that will allow them to expound on the answers they provided in the survey.

The growing physician shortage in Louisiana will only worsen health outcomes for residents in the state. Determining the reasons for these shortages is essential to reversing the trend and ensuring healthy outcomes for Louisiana.