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CANCER PREVENTION & RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE OF TEXAS

**Prevention Outreach in FY 2021**

- The National Cancer Institute's official blog [Cancer Currents](#) features Abbey Berenson, M.D., Ph.D., professor of obstetrics and gynecology at The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, in an **October 14, 2020** article, which examines a study that proves the HPV vaccine dramatically reduces incidents of cervical cancer in widely vaccinated populations. This study of nearly 1.7 million women provides an incredibly important message, Dr. Berenson explained, because it proves that women who receive the vaccine before age 17 are better protected against cervical cancer. Dr. Berenson is the program director for eight CPRIT-funded HPV vaccination projects. With CPRIT's support, Dr. Berenson and her colleagues are increasing Texans' access to cancer prevention services and information. In February of 2019, Dr. Berenson received a \$1.4 million CPRIT Academic Research award (RP190022) to lead a trial that compares the effectiveness of two doses versus three doses of the HPV vaccine in people 15–26 years old.
- Bryce Kyburz, a project collaborator for the CPRIT-funded program Taking Texas Tobacco Free, led two nation-wide virtual training sessions hosted by the National Behavioral Health Network for Tobacco & Cancer Control and funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. CPRIT granted a \$300,000 Prevention award (PP200051) in August of 2020 to help the leaders of the Taking Texas Tobacco Free program reduce tobacco use and promote wellness among Texans in behavioral health and substance use treatment centers.
- In an interview that aired on **October 30, 2020**, Izi Obokhare, M.D, FACS, FICS, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center surgeon discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cancer screenings in the Amarillo area. Dr. Obokhare is the Project Director of Get FIT to Stay Fit: Stepping Up to Fight Colorectal Cancer in the Panhandle (PP180031) serving 26 rural counties. He reports that since the pandemic, he has seen a 70 to 75 percent decrease in people coming in to get screened, explaining, "It's crucial to catch problems early, especially cancer. When someone is diagnosed at an early stage, like stage one cancer, the prognosis is much better, and the cure rate is better."
- An article published in the **May 9, 2021**, edition of the *El Paso Herald-Post* featured Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso's Drs. Navkiran Shokar, Jennifer Molokwu, and Jessica Calderon-Mora and their work to treat and prevent cervical cancer along the U.S.-Mexico border. The article highlighted CPRIT-funded projects on cervical cancer screening (PP140211) and HPV vaccination (PP190058).
- El Buen Samaritano hosted a **May 22, 2021**, launch celebration for the Big Pink Bus, a mobile mammography van. Ascension Seton donated the bus, which had been out of service for several years. The event recognized the fundraising and organizational efforts of stakeholders and Lone Star Circle of Care staff who have worked to transition and refurbish the mobile unit into service once

again. Dr. Elizabeth Kvale's CPRIT-funded Advancing Breast Health among Uninsured Women project (PP200034) at The University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School, will offer mammograms. Featured speakers included State Representative Donna Howard, Williamson County Commissioner Cynthia Long, Central Texas Addressing Cancer Together (CTX-ACT) Co-Chair Susan Dawson, and Dr. Kvale. Austin's Fox 7 and CBS 42 newscasts aired interviews from the event.

- On **June 2, 2021**, Austin's Fox 7 News featured Dr. Michael Pignone's CPRIT-funded colorectal cancer (CRC) screening projects at The University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School (PP170082 and PP200066). In collaboration with CommUnityCare's safety net health clinics, Dr. Pignone leads the team behind an innovative CRC screening initiative that has distributed more than 22,000 at-home fecal immunochemical test (FIT) kits through the mail. The screening outreach initiative uses low-cost measures focused first on creating communication about the topic. Patients receive reminder mailers and telephone text messages to prompt them to follow the FIT screening process. Bilingual patient navigators helped patients with positive stool tests receive follow-up colonoscopies to find and remove precancerous polyps and detect CRC at earlier, more treatable stages. During its first year, the program doubled the percentage of patients screened for CRC from 18.4% to 37%.

Health economists at UT's LBJ School of Public Affairs studied the outcomes and costs associated with Dr. Pignone's screening initiative. Their analysis aims to measure and prove the cost-effectiveness of the screening initiative for a safety-net population, setting the stage for expanding this innovative cancer prevention model beyond Austin.

- The Salud America! Blog on **June 4, 2021**, discussed the dangers of secondhand smoke and highlighted the CPRIT-funded Quittxt program as a tobacco cessation resource. Dr. Amelie Ramirez of The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio leads the Quittxt program (PP140176, PP170099), a bilingual service for smartphones that sends messages via text or Facebook Messenger to help coach and encourage people on the journey toward smoking cessation.