



CANCER PREVENTION & RESEARCH
INSTITUTE OF TEXAS

Prevention Highlights

Updates and milestones for CPRIT Prevention projects
as reported in Fiscal Year 2023

For Fiscal Year 2023

1. In 2018, Americans aged 50-54 were 30.4% less likely to meet recommended colorectal cancer screening guidelines than Americans aged 70-75 and faced higher screening disparities based on race, ethnicity, household income, educational attainment, and insurance coverage. Because younger individuals face unique barriers to screening, Caitlin Murphy, Ph.D., MPH, associate professor, Department of Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences at The University of Texas Health Science Center, and colleagues sought to predict screening disparities by looking at screening patterns in the previously youngest age group. The team estimated prevalence of colorectal cancer screening (by colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, CT colonography, or stool-based tests) in adults ages 50 to 75 years using data from the National Health Interview Survey and was assessed during eight discontinuous years between 2000 and 2018. The results, published on September 2, 2022, in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*, report that colorectal cancer screening participation increased over time, but the increase was smallest among individuals aged 50-54. In contrast, screening for individuals aged 70-75 years increased from 2000 to 2018. The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center received a \$1.5 million CPRIT Prevention grant (PP160075) in 2016 to support the CRC screening outreach program.
2. On September 22, 2022, *UTHealth News* featured All For Them (AFT), a CPRIT-funded HPV vaccination project (PP200017) directed by Paula Cuccaro, Ph.D., of The University of Texas Health Science Center School of Public Health in Houston. AFT is an initiative which provides free vaccination clinics at middle and high schools in six districts across the state: Aldine ISD, Crowley ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Goose Creek CISD, Houston ISD, and Spring ISD. In AFT's mobile school-based vaccination clinics, 96.1% of parents with children who needed an HPV vaccine dose have consented to the immunization.
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced on September 23, 2022, that Harlingen-based Su Clinica Familiar was one of eleven community health centers in the country to receive a Health Resources and Services Administration grant to facilitate access to and improve equity in cancer screening. The \$500,000 "Accelerating Cancer Screening" grant award brings together health centers with National Cancer Institute Designated Cancer Centers to facilitate access to life-saving cancer screenings and early detection services for underserved populations. The awards advance President Biden's Cancer Moonshot goals, which aim to close the cancer screening gap, decrease the impact of preventable cancers, and support patients and caregivers. Su Clinica Familiar is a service provider partner for two CPRIT Prevention projects at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer, Project ACCESS: Increasing Access to Cervical Cancer Screening and Treatment Services in Texas directed by Kathleen Schmeler, M.D. (PP220037) and Alliance for Colorectal Cancer Testing 3.0 directed by Lewis Foxhall, M.D. (PP220005).
4. Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, MPH, professor, director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research, chair of the Department of Population Health Sciences at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, is an internationally recognized health disparities researcher. Oprah Winfrey selected Dr. Ramirez as a "Cycle Breaker" for her innovating work in building health equity in the Latino community locally and nationally. Cycle Breakers is a video series from the Smithsonian Channel that spotlights leaders who are solving health disparities in marginalized communities. Oprah chose each Cycle Breaker to augment her documentary, *The Color of Care*, which chronicles how people of color suffer from systemically substandard US healthcare and the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the devastating consequences of this inequity. Dr. Ramirez's episode, which features her mission to break the cycles of inequities in healthcare for Latinos, was released on Oct. 3, 2022. "The work that you're doing to make real change and help correct disparities in our healthcare system is invaluable," Oprah said. "I hope you feel empowered now to continue on your path to helping communities take the right step, the right next step, to begin to make a difference." In addition to her many efforts over the last 30 years, Dr. Ramirez directs Quitxt, a bilingual tobacco-cessation service for young Latino adults using mobile-phone text messages, funded by CPRIT. The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio has received three CPRIT Prevention grants (PP140176, PP170099, PP180092) for a total of \$4 million to support this health disparities research with Dr. Ramirez as PI.
5. Mailed stool testing programs increase colorectal cancer (CRC) screening in diverse settings, but whether uptake differs by key demographic characteristics has not been well-studied. Researchers from The University of Texas at Austin examined the uptake and equity of the first cycle of a mailed stool test program implemented over a 3-year period in a Central Texas Federally

Qualified Health Center system. In this retrospective cohort study within a single-arm intervention, principal investigator Michael Pignone M.D., MPH, chair, Department of Internal Medicine, and team mailed outreach in English/Spanish, included an introductory letter, free-of-charge fecal immunochemical test (FIT), and lab requisition with postage-paid mailer, simple instructions, and a medical records update postcard. Over 3 years, 33,606 patients received an initial cycle of outreach. Overall, 19.9% completed at least one mailed FIT, 5.6% tested positive during that initial cycle, and 72.5% of those with positive FIT completed a colonoscopy. Hispanic/Latinx, Spanish-speaking, and uninsured patients were more likely to complete mailed FIT compared with white, English-speaking, and commercially insured patients. Spanish-speaking patients were more likely to complete colonoscopy after positive FIT compared with English-speaking patients. The results of the Mailed FIT outreach, published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* on December 1, 2022, proved effective in equitably reaching patients not up to date for CRC screening. The December 5, 2022, edition of UNDARK digital magazine featured the colorectal cancer screening project directed by Dr. Michael Pignone. The University of Texas at Austin received two CPRIT Prevention grants (PP170082, PP200066) in 2017 and 2020 totaling \$4.2 million for the support of the multi-faceted intervention program.

6. Susan Gaskill, M.D., joined The Rose Breast Imaging Center of Excellence in February 2023, continuing her three decades as a radiologist specializing in breast care. As a Board-Certified radiologist, Dr. Gaskill was the first fellow at Baylor's Susan G. Komen Breast Center. In announcing the newest member of The Rose's Medical Staff, Sarfaraz Sadrudin, M.D., lead interpreting physician, said, "I have known Dr. Gaskill since I was in fellowship, she is revered by both her patients and the medical community. I am happy to have Dr. Gaskill join The Rose family and bring her skills and patient-centric care to The Rose." As Founder of Victory Breast Diagnostics and Women's Imaging, she is known for her compassionate, comfortable, patient-centric care. The Rose is a Breast Imaging Center of Excellence offering two Houston-based breast diagnostic centers and Mobile Mammography which covers 43 counties in Southeast Texas. The Rose has received eight CPRIT Prevention grants from 2010 to 2022 (including the most recent, PP220015, PP190043, PP170091) totaling nearly \$12 million.

7. On February 27, 2023, *UTMB News* featured Dr. Ana Rodriguez's CPRIT project, "School-Based Human Papillomavirus Vaccination Program in the Lower Rio Grande Valley." CPRIT awarded The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston nearly \$7 million since 2016 (PP160097, PP190023, PP200057, PP230043) to support this prevention project.

8. Colorectal cancer (CRC) screening is effective in reducing CRC incidence and death, but it is underutilized. Federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) serve populations at high risk for being unscreened, including uninsured and rural populations. However, these efforts are challenging, particularly in states like Texas where 40% of patients seen in FQHCs are uninsured; the proportion of patients up to date with CRC screening in the 72 FQHCs in Texas was only 34.2% in 2020 and 36.2% in 2021. Michael Pignone, M.D., MPH, chair, Department of Internal Medicine, The University of Texas at Austin, and colleagues obtained data from multiple sources (the CDC, the Texas Department of State Health Services, etc.), conducted geospatial analysis, and identified and mapped a list of priority FQHCs in Texas where the number of FQHC patients without up-to-date CRC screening is high and participation of the FQHCs in CPRIT-funded CRC screening projects is absent. The results and map were published in *Preventing Chronic Disease* on March 2, 2023. The geospatial analysis produced a list of 11 FQHCs where improvements in CRC screening among age-eligible patients could have the largest impact. In the next phase of the research, the team will use the mapped information to contact and consult with the FQHCs to enhance CRC screening in their systems. The University of Texas at Austin received a \$300,000 CPRIT Prevention grant (PP210045) in August 2021 to develop an evidence-informed blueprint, implementation guide, and consultation service for expanding mailed FIT programs to underserved areas of Texas.

9. Amelie Ramirez, DrPH, MPH, was inducted to the San Antonio Women's Hall of Fame "Health" category on March 4, 2023. Since 1984, the San Antonio Women's Hall of Fame has annually inducted women from Bexar and surrounding counties who have shaped the future of San Antonio and paved the way for women in Texas business, service, education, and more. Dr. Ramirez is professor and chair of the Department of Population Health Sciences, and currently directs the Salud America! national multimedia program, conducts breast cancer disparities research on quality of life and survivorship issues, and directs Quitxt, a bilingual tobacco-cessation service for young Latino adults using mobile-phone text messages, funded by CPRIT. In 2022, TV personality

Oprah Winfrey selected Ramirez as a “Cycle Breaker” for her groundbreaking work to build health equity in the Latino community. The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio received three CPRIT Prevention grants (PP180092, PP170099, PP140176) in 2018, 2017, and 2014 totaling \$4 million to promote Dr. Ramirez’ work to increase accessibility and utilization of evidence-based smoking cessation services among underserved young adults in Texas.

10. On March 7, 2023, CommUnityCare Health Centers, in conjunction with Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin, was selected as the Grand Prize recipient of the 2023 *80% in Every Community National Achievement Award*. The honor singles out individuals and organizations for dedicating their time, talent, and expertise to advance colorectal cancer screening rates to 80% or higher across the United States in an equitable manner. During its first year alone, the joint program doubled the percentage of patients screened for colorectal cancer from 18.4% to 37%. The award is given by The National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable, founded by the American Cancer Society and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Our partnership with CommUnityCare has helped numerous patients get screened and has been implemented in a way that improves health care equity,” said Michael Pignone, M.D., MPH, chair of Dell Med’s Department of Internal Medicine and Program Leader for the CPRIT awards. The University of Texas at Austin received 3 CPRIT Prevention grants (PP170082, PP200066, PP210045) in 2017, 2020, and 2021 totaling \$4.6 million to support Dr. Pignone’s effort to increase CRC screening rates and reduce health disparities.

11. On March 8, 2023, KFDA News in Amarillo featured Izi Obokhare, M.D., FACS, FICS, of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center at Amarillo as part of its “Health Watch” segment during Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Dr. Obokhare highlighted the increasing rate of colorectal cancer cases in young adults in the region and nationwide. He is the director of CPRIT project, “Get F.I.T. to Stay Fit - Stepping up to Fight Colorectal Cancer in the Panhandle.” CPRIT awarded Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center more than \$5 million since 2014 (PP150031, PP180031, PP210017) to support this prevention project.

12. The March 14 edition of *Vital Record, News from Texas A&M Health* featured a discussion with Jason McKnight, M.D., M.S., FAAFP, about the basics of colorectal screening and prevention. Dr. McKnight, clinical associate professor at the Texas A&M University School of Medicine and director of residency recruitment for the Texas A&M Family Medicine Residency program, is also the director of the CPRIT project, “Leveraging Texas C-STEP’s Robust Rural Partnerships for Successful Expansion of its Proven Colorectal Cancer Screening Program to Include HCV Screening.” CPRIT has awarded Texas A&M University Health Science Center nearly \$4 million since 2018 (PP220013, PP180037) to support this prevention project.

13. On March 14, 2023, the Third Annual Healthcare Digital Marketing Awards recognized The Rose for their outstanding digital marketing efforts to empower women to take control of their breast health. The Rose, a recipient of multiple CPRIT Prevention awards and the leading nonprofit breast health care organization in southeast Texas, received a Gold Award for the character “Mona the Mammo Queen” and a Silver Award for The Rose’s educational video “Let’s Talk about Your Breasts.” Their “Mona the Mammo Queen” campaign is a creative and engaging way to encourage women to get their mammograms. The Rose developed the character of Mona to speak to younger women, especially those turning 40 and help them feel comfortable about the screening process. The campaign was highly successful in increasing mammogram appointments and encouraging women to take control of their breast health. The Rose’s video, “Let’s Talk about Your Breasts,” is a powerful and uplifting resource that focuses on partnering with the community to raise awareness about breast health in a positive and inclusive way, across cultures where conversations about the body and health are often silenced. CPRIT has awarded The Rose eight CPRIT Prevention grants since 2010 (PP100096, PP110154, PP120040, PP140171, PP150080, PP170091, PP190043, PP220015) totaling nearly \$12 million.

14. Approximately 94% of the diagnosed cases of human papillomavirus (HPV)-attributed cancer in the U.S. each year can be prevented by the HPV vaccine. Texas ranks 47 out of the 50 U.S. states for HPV up to date (UTD) rates, with only 51.5% of adolescents aged 13 to 17 years UTD on the vaccine. Disparities are present between rural and urban vaccination rates, with adolescents living in rural non-metropolitan statistical areas having the lowest HPV vaccine UTD rates. Jane R. Montealegre, Ph.D., assistant professor, Department of Pediatrics, Hematology/Oncology at Baylor College of Medicine, and colleagues conducted a needs assessment to understand current clinical practices regarding HPV vaccination in rural East Texas primary health-care settings, assessing health-care providers’ perceived barriers to HPV vaccination, as well as current strategies in place to address those

barriers. As reported in *Vaccines* on March 25, 2023, survey respondents still recognized parental vaccine hesitancy as a barrier to HPV vaccination in their clinics and that face-to-face communication between the provider and parent remains the most effective strategy. Baylor College of Medicine received a \$1.28 million CPRIT Prevention grant (PP190051) in August 2019 to significantly increase the proportion of adolescent patients within a network of safety net clinics who are protected by the HPV vaccine against HPV-associated cancers.

15. The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio announced a partnership on March 29, 2023, with TripleBlind, a leader in data de-identification, to collaborate on cancer prevention research. The collaboration will use TripleBlind's automated de-identification and privacy enhancing software to enable the researchers to study the impact of collaborative research on the quality of patient care. The team will investigate the advantages of TripleBlind's technology on monitoring quality-of-care delivery across multiple federally qualified health centers in South Texas. The research will demonstrate the effect of using TripleBlind's software to improve quality of care via more direct data interactions between collaborating entities. The partnership will use the CPRIT-funded "Screen, Treat, or Prevent Hepatocellular Cancer-Hepatitis C (STOP-HCC)" project, led by UT Southwestern's Mamta Jain, M.D., MPH, which focuses on Hepatitis B vaccination and Hepatitis C screening and navigation to treatment. CPRIT awarded three grants to UT Southwestern totaling \$6.3 million since 2018 (PP170121, PP180091, PP230046) to create and expand the STOP-HCC program.

16. The University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth's March 30, 2023, newsletter featured the CPRIT-funded "All For Them" HPV vaccination program led by Paula Cuccaro, Ph.D., assistant professor of Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences and a researcher at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston's Center for Health Promotion and Prevention Research. The program has partnered with Erika Thompson, Ph.D., to bring HPV vaccinations to students in North Texas. The All For Them initiative, run by UTHealth Houston's School of Public Health, provides free vaccination clinics at middle and high schools in six public school districts: Aldine ISD, Crowley ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Goose Creek CISD, Houston ISD and Spring ISD. The clinics in medically underserved schools offer all childhood and adolescent vaccines — including the HPV vaccine, which protects against six types of cancer. The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston was awarded three CPRIT Prevention grants totaling nearly \$4 million since 2017 (PP170046, PP20017, PP230033) to establish and expand the All For Them comprehensive school-based approach to increase HPV vaccination through public schools.

17. KXXV TV, Waco's ABC affiliate, interviewed Jason McKnight, M.D., M.S., FAAFP, on April 3, 2023, about the importance of colorectal screening and prevention during Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, encouraging those without health insurance to contact the CPRIT-funded Texas C-STEP project about receiving free screenings. Dr. McKnight, clinical associate professor at the Texas A&M University School of Medicine and director of residency recruitment for the Texas A&M Family Medicine Residency program, is also the director of the CPRIT project, "Leveraging Texas C-STEP's Robust Rural Partnerships for Successful Expansion of its Proven Colorectal Cancer Screening Program to Include HCV Screening." CPRIT awarded Texas A&M University Health Science Center nearly \$4 million since 2018 (PP220013, PP180037) to support this prevention project.

18. Studies have shown that the available HPV vaccines reduced cervical cancer incidence by 90% in fully vaccinated girls and young adults. However, approximately 80% of eligible individuals (male and female) are not up to date on this vaccination series. Abbey Berenson, M.D., Ph.D., professor, Departments of Obstetrics & Gynecology and Pediatrics and fellow researchers from The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston set out to determine predictors of incomplete HPV vaccination among individuals aged 27–45 in the U.S. This retrospective cohort study used multilevel multivariable logistic regression models for data on 7,662 individuals identified as being fully or partially vaccinated against HPV, nested within 3,839 neighborhoods across the U.S. The results, published in *Vaccines* on April 10, 2023, revealed that the odds of not completing the HPV vaccine series included participants older than 30 years of age and participants living in South-region neighborhoods of the U.S. compared with those residing in Northeast-region neighborhoods. This study revealed that interventions to improve HPV vaccination series completion rates for this age group should take into consideration both individual and contextual factors. The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston received a \$2 million CPRIT Prevention grant (PP200005) in February 2020 to provide up-to-date, accurate, and credible data to inform the design of programs and interventions to address the high rate of incomplete HPV vaccine series.

19. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately half of all new cases of sexually transmitted infections, including HPV, occurred in adolescents and young adults 15–24 years old in the U.S. in 2018. All for Them (AFT) is a CPRIT-funded, comprehensive, multilevel, multicomponent program to increase initiation and completion of the HPV vaccine series among middle-school-aged adolescents attending public schools in medically underserved areas in Texas. Led by Paula Cuccaro, Ph.D., assistant professor, Health Promotion & Behavioral Science at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, AFT comprised a social marketing campaign, school-based vaccination clinics, and school nurse continuing education. As published in *Vaccines* on May 5, 2023, the team found that securing partnership with district leaders is pivotal to ensuring buy-in from principals for program implementation; school nurses are more successful at supporting school-based vaccination with school-level support and their engagement may also dispel HPV vaccine hesitancy among parents; and social marketing strategies are integral to program implementation, which also can be achieved through increased community presence of the project team. The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston received a \$1.5 million CPRIT Prevention grant (PP170046) to increase access to immunization services for youth in MUAs and establish an ongoing program of SBVCs in public middle schools.
20. On May 11, 2023, Austin's NPR station KUT 90.5 featured Dr. Michael Pignone's colorectal cancer FIT screening project, "Improving Colorectal Cancer Screening in Vulnerable Populations in Travis County." The NPR story, "One Way To Get More Austinites Screened for Colon Cancer: Mail-In Poop Tests," highlighted the CPRIT-funded collaboration between the Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin and Travis County's federally qualified health clinic system, CommUnityCare. After the story aired Dr. Pignone tweeted, "Not exactly a glamour shot but I'll take it! Many thanks to @CPRITTexas and @AmericanCancer for their support of this work!" The University of Texas at Austin and Dr. Pignone received three Prevention grants totaling \$4.5 million since 2017 (PP170082, PP200066, PP210045) to create and disseminate Dr. Pignone's mailed stool testing program for colorectal cancer prevention in underserved communities in Texas.
21. On May 16, 2023, Baylor College of Medicine recognized Maria Carmenza Mejia, M.D., MPH, FACPM, with the Clark Faculty Service Award. The Clark Faculty Service Award honors a Baylor College of Medicine faculty member whose exemplary service contributions represent their professions and Baylor's mission, vision and values at the highest level. Dr. Mejia, associate professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, is co-program director of the CPRIT-funded lung cancer screening projects, "Equitable Access to Lung Cancer Screening and Smoking Cessation Treatment: A Comprehensive Primary Care and Community Health Approach" (PP180016) and its expansion award, "Expansion of the Lung Cancer Screening and Tobacco Control Network to Rural and Medically Underserved Populations" (PP210044) totaling \$3.47 million.
22. *The New York Times* featured Michael Pignone, M.D., MPH, chair, Department of Internal Medicine at The University of Texas at Austin, in the June 12 article, "How A.I. Chatbots Are Helping Doctors Be More Human and Empathetic." Dr. Pignone and his team used ChatGPT to assist developing a screening questionnaire on the CPRIT-funded project, "Screening and Treatment for Unhealthy Alcohol Use as a Means of Cancer Prevention." The University of Texas at Austin was awarded a \$1 million CPRIT Prevention grant (PP200036) in 2020 to support this project.
23. The University of Texas Health Houston School of Public Health newsletter featured the CPRIT-funded liver cancer prevention program, GRASSROOTS HEALTH, on July 6, 2023. The program, co-led by Vanessa Schick, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Management, Policy and Community Health, and Jack Tsai, Ph.D., professor and regional dean of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Public Health in San Antonio, provides access to testing, vaccines and treatment for hepatitis B and C to those experiencing homelessness in Houston and San Antonio. CPRIT awarded The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston more than \$3 million in 2018 and 2022 (PP180086, PP220022) to create and expand this program.
24. The July 11, 2023, Texas Tech Health Check podcast released by Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center featured the CPRIT-funded project "Get FIT to Stay Fit" and its project director, Izi Obokhare, M.D., FACS, FICS. The project provides colorectal cancer screening and diagnostic testing in 26 counties in the Texas Panhandle. Dr. Obokhare is a Texas Tech Physicians surgeon,

associate professor in general and colorectal surgery, and associate dean for faculty development at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Amarillo. CPRIT awarded Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center nearly \$5.5 million since 2014 (PP150031, PP180031, PP210017) to establish and extend this program.

25. On August 7, 2023, the Community Crossroads TV station in Victoria featured the CPRIT-funded “Salud en Mis Manos” breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnostic testing program directed by Lara Savas, Ph.D., associate professor at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Public Health. Senior Program Manager Emily Adlparvar, MPH, discussed breast health, mammography, and the collaboration with The Rose of Houston to provide mammograms and breast health education to uninsured and medically underserved women in Victoria. CPRIT awarded UTHealth Houston four grants totaling \$6.5 million (PP110081, PP160047, PP190061, PP230038) to establish and expand the Salud en Mis Manos program since 2011.

26. The Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) announced on August 8, 2023, that Amelie Ramirez, DrPH, MPH, leader of Salud America! at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, has won the 2023 Cancer Health Equity Award. The award recognizes exceptional leadership in promoting health equity, mitigating cancer disparities, and advocating for diversity and inclusion at a cancer center. Dr. Ramirez conducts research and interventions to reduce Latino cancer disparities. She aims to reduce lung cancer with Quitxt. This bilingual text-message service helps Latino young adults quit smoking, funded by CPRIT. She currently directs the Salud America! national multimedia program to empower its vast network of over 500,000 community and school leaders to drive healthy policy and system changes to promote health equity and support for Latino families. Dr. Ramirez is the Principal Investigator in three CPRIT Prevention grants (PP140176, PP170099, PP180092) awarded to The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio in 2014, 2017, and 2018, totaling \$4.2 million.

27. The *Baytown Sun* newspaper featured All For Them, a CPRIT-funded, school-based HPV vaccination project led by Paula Cuccaro, Ph.D., assistant professor, Department of Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences at The University of Texas Health Science Center Houston’s School of Public Health, on August 10, 2023. The All For Them initiative provides free vaccination clinics at middle and high schools in six public school districts: Aldine ISD, Crowley ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Goose Creek CISD, Houston ISD and Spring ISD. The clinics in medically underserved schools offer all childhood and adolescent vaccines — including the HPV vaccine, which protects against six types of cancer. CPRIT has awarded The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston three prevention awards totaling nearly \$4 million since 2017 (PP170046, PP20017, PP230033) to establish and expand the All For Them comprehensive school-based approach to increase HPV vaccination through public schools.

28. The August 31, 2023, edition of the *Daily Texan* highlighted Navkiran Shokar, M.D., MPH, chair, Department of Population Health, and Mike Pignone, M.D., MPH, chair, Department of Internal Medicine, The University of Texas at Austin, and the \$3 million CPRIT grant for the first Colorectal Cancer Screening Coordinating Center (PP230060). The five-year grant will provide funds to spearhead the Coordinating Center for Colorectal Cancer Screening Across Texas (CONNECT), which aims to mitigate health disparities and increase the number of Texans screened for colorectal cancer. “That’s why it’s called CONNECT,” Dr. Shokar said. “The vision behind it is truly to connect to anyone that’s in the pathway for screening, including the people that are receiving screening.” CPRIT awarded The University of Texas at Austin \$4.5 million since 2017 (PP170082, PP200066, PP210045) to create and disseminate Dr. Pignone’s mailed stool testing program for colorectal cancer prevention in underserved communities in Texas. CPRIT awarded Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso four Prevention grants totaling over \$10 million since 2011 (PP110156, PP140164, PP170068, PP210005) to establish and expand colorectal cancer screening and diagnostic testing during Dr. Shokar’s tenure at Texas Tech University HSC El Paso.

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