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Larry Green Center Releases New Primary Care Survey Showing Clinicians Are Leaving the Profession, Experience Higher Levels of Burnout Than Before COVID

Survey shows only 1% of clinicians believe primary care has recovered in the wake of the pandemic

Washington (July 12, 2023)- The Larry A. Green Center, in collaboration with the Primary Care Collaborative (PCC), today released new data from its ongoing survey detailing the state of the United States primary care system since the start of COVID-19. The survey reveals only 1% of primary care clinicians believe the practice has recovered since the pandemic. Further, only 19% of clinicians say their practice is fully staffed – down from 22% during the same time period in 2022.

This data comes at a time when primary care clinicians are reporting unprecedented levels of burnout, working long and grueling hours on the front line of care. The survey reports that 32% of primary care clinicians are feeling high levels of burnout, stress, and moral injury, and 61% of those surveyed believe that primary care in the United States is crumbling. Most of the respondents attribute the breakdown of the U.S. primary care system to various issues, including the ripple effect of COVID-19 and an insufficient workforce that cannot meet the U.S. population's care demands. In the recent March 2023 survey, 68% of respondents said they had first-hand knowledge of practices that closed due to COVID-19, with 35% receiving new patients from closed practices.

Three years since the pandemic started, primary care professionals continue to struggle but are demonstrating their persistence in achieving their commitment to the care of patients. However, that commitment continues to be missing from national leaders who have the potential to enact policies to support primary care.

"The crumbling of primary care is emblematic of a larger national crisis – a malignant neglect of frontline caring, relationships, and the infrastructure required to sustain it," said Rebecca Etz, PhD, co-director of The Larry A. Green Center. "We are living in a period of time where people keep calling it the 'new normal,' but there is nothing normal about the neglect of frontline health care professionals pushed to the brink of moral injury and burnout. Our continued failure to act swiftly has placed the foundation of our healthcare system in danger. It is not a matter of if, but when there will be another pandemic, and this survey shows if we don't act soon, primary care won't be there when it happens."

"There is more lip service than actual support of primary care, which is the foundation of our health system. A recent scorecard shows that the U.S. spends less than 5% of total health expenditures on

primary care,” said Ann Greiner, President and CEO, Primary Care Collaborative. “In contrast, the US spends more on dialysis patients. Is it any wonder that many patients experience the front door of our healthcare system as nearly closed – it takes months to get a physical and visits are rushed. Policymakers must invest more in primary care to restore the health of the American people. “

Since March 2020, the Larry A. Green Center has collected data from primary care clinicians indicating drastic staffing cuts, closures, and other financial setbacks that could be alleviated with policy changes that better realize the potential for primary care as an essential function of our health care system. The PCC has collaborated with the Larry A. Green Center since 2020.

The latest survey data shows that primary care continues to struggle, with practice closures, financial troubles, and understaffing. 78% of respondents felt that the workforce is undersized to meet U.S. care needs and only 19% of clinicians said that their practices were fully staffed.

While the primary care crisis continues to affect America’s healthcare system, 36% of respondents reported recent improvement in their practices since the pandemic, and 48% of those still in practice said that their relationships with their patients helped them carry on with their operations.

The survey of clinicians was fielded from March 13-17 and received 847 responses from 47 different states and Washington, D.C. Respondents were made up of: 11% nurse practitioners, 73% FM, 12% IM, 5% pediatricians; 46% hospital/health system owned; 24% self-owned; 25% small practices; 19% rural; 15% Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers.

More information about the survey: <https://www.green-center.org/covid-survey>

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About The Larry A. Green Center:

The [Larry A. Green Center](#) for the Advancement of Primary Health Care for the Public Good is a thought collective founded by Rebecca Etz, PhD at Virginia Commonwealth University, and Kurt Stange, MD, PhD at Case Western Reserve University. The Green Center works to reclaim and reconstitute the intellectual foundations of primary care, to advance the science of medicine learned and practiced within layered and competing social frameworks of meaning, and to deliver on a now 50-year-old promise: better health and improved health care through a synergistic focus on both humanism and healing. We are nimble, inquisitive, curious, and open. We make personal doctoring and innovation visible.

About Primary Care Collaborative:

Founded in 2006, [Primary Care Collaborative](#) (PCC), formerly known as Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative, is a nonprofit multi-stakeholder membership organization dedicated to advancing an effective and efficient health system built on a strong foundation of primary care and the patient-centered medical home. Representing a broad group of public and private organizations, PCC’s mission is to unify and engage diverse stakeholders in promoting policies and sharing best practices that support

the growth of high-performing primary care and achieve the “Quadruple Aim:” better care, better health, lower costs, and greater joy for clinicians and staff in delivery of care.