



PRIMARY CARE STEPPING UP INVOLVEMENT IN COVID VACCINATION EFFORT, BUT FUTURE OF PRIMARY CARE IS UNCERTAIN

PRESS RELEASE

4 in 10 Clinicians Worry That Primary Care Will Be Gone in 5 Years

WASHINGTON, August 2, 2021—As the country experiences COVID surges again and struggles to reach the Biden administration’s vaccination goals, new data released today by the Larry A. Green Center, in collaboration with the Primary Care Collaborative (PCC) and 3rd Conversation, shows that primary care is playing a deeper role in vaccination efforts. And as new strategies are tried to convince significant numbers of unvaccinated Americans to get the shot, the importance of primary care using their trusted relationships with the public to provide outreach and education regarding the vaccine is becoming clearer, with President Biden and his administration [stressing primary care’s role](#).

In a survey conducted July 9-13, 2021, more than half (52%) of practices reported receiving enough or more than enough vaccines for their patients, and 31% are partnering with local organizations or government to prioritize people for vaccination.

While the supply of vaccines is now flowing to primary care, clinicians are sometimes finding that getting shots in patients’ arms is challenging. More than half of the survey’s respondents – 53% – note that hesitancy among unvaccinated patients is high and hard to counter.

The survey also asked clinicians about their stress levels. Primary care practices have seen an easing of stress recently after the intense surges of COVID cases in 2020 and early 2021. A large majority of respondents – 76% – rank the strain on their practice from COVID-19-related changes and pressures on the low or moderate end of the scale (1, 2 or 3 on a 5-point scale). However, more than 1 in 3 (36%) say they are constantly lethargic, find it hard to find joy in anything, and/or struggle at times to maintain clear thinking.

The fatigue reflected in the survey data shows potential threats to the primary care workforce or the existence of the sector itself. 40% of respondents say they worry that primary care will be gone in five years, and 21% say they expect to leave primary care within three years.

“The administration has now recognized the key role primary care is able to play in reaching vaccination goals,” said Rebecca Etz, PhD, co-director of The Larry A. Green Center. “While the pressure is now on primary care to convert the most vaccine-hesitant, little has been done to support primary care to date. Policymakers need to bear witness to the quiet heroism of primary care – a workforce that suffered five times more COVID-related deaths than any other medical discipline.”

“As the federal government updates guidance to keep COVID-19 at bay, it also needs to implement strategies to support primary care, which is a vital ally in the vaccination effort,” said Ann Greiner, PCC’s President and CEO.

“Primary care is the front door to the healthcare system for most Americans, and the door is coming off its hinges,” said Christine Bechtel, co-founder of 3rd Conversation, a community of patients and clinicians. “The fact that 40% of clinicians are worried about the future of primary care is of deep concern, and it’s time for new public policies that value primary care for the common good that it is. Policymakers need look no further than the recent [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report](#) on primary care, which provides a road map to primary care’s future,” she said.

Since March 2020, the Larry A. Green Center, the PCC and 3rd Conversation have collected and disseminated data from

29 surveys of primary care clinicians on their abilities and attitudes in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Responses to the latest survey came from 702 respondents from 46 states and 3 territories. Specialization: 69% family medicine; 6% pediatrics; 14% internal medicine; 4% geriatrics; 7% other. Clinician type: 71% MD; 6% DO; 14% NP; 3% PA; 6% other. Settings: 22% community health centers or similar; 20% rural. Practice size: 29% had 1-3 clinicians; 44% had 10 or more clinicians. Ownership: 30% self-owned; 39% system-owned, 6% government; 5% membership-based.

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About the Primary Care Collaborative:

Founded in 2006, the [Primary Care Collaborative](#) (PCC) 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 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.

About The Green Center:

The Larry A. Green Center for the Advancement of Primary Health Care for the Public Good is a research group 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 3rd Conversation:

[3rd Conversation](#) is a national initiative reimagining the future of health care by reinventing the clinician-patient relationship for the modern era. Powered by [X4 Health](#), 3rd Conversation works at both the local and national levels to address health professional burnout, improve patient experience and realize the promise of humanity and connection in our health care system. Funding support is provided by the Morris-Singer Foundation and the New York State Health Foundation.