

Executive Summary

Imagine being the director of a university health center in the fourth largest city of the United States. Not only that, consider that we in Houston are blessed to have the largest and best medical facility in the world. This Medical Center happens to be less than fifteen minutes from our very own campus health center. The pressure is always on to attract and retain the best health care providers. Needless to say, it is imperative that we provide the best medical care to our patients. To do anything less is unacceptable and inconceivable

Recently I had a colleague in the medical center ask how it is that our university clinic can attract and retain health care providers. It is no easy task I assure you. Thanks to an increase in the Health Center fee in FY08, we were recently able to substantially increase the salaries of our healthcare providers. However, our salaries still do not compete with the medical center. The current economic crisis is also affecting our health care providers. A part time physician who has served the Health Center for 24+ years has recently tendered his resignation due to economic reasons to give full time to his private practice.

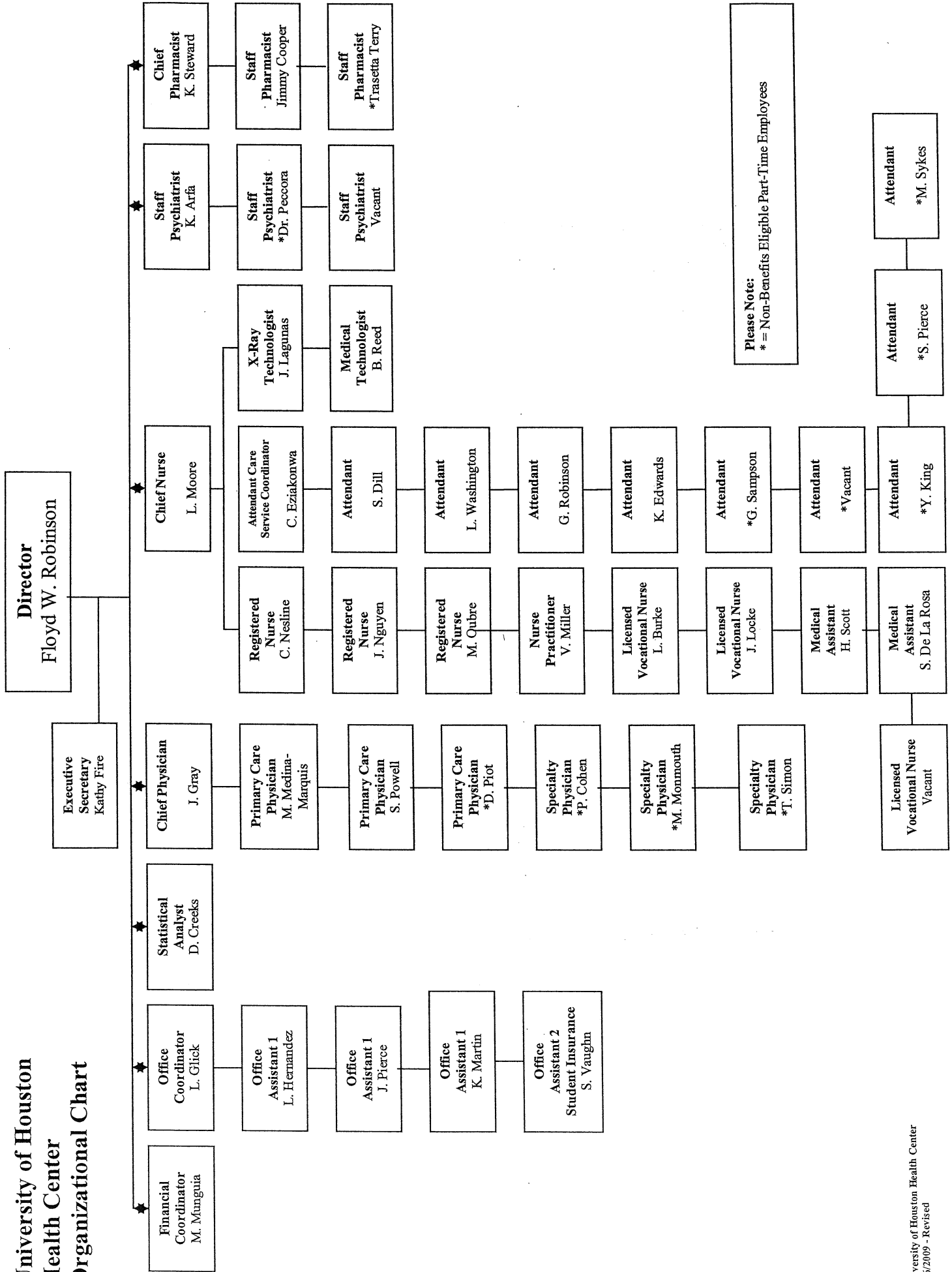
Our mission is to care for the patient and provide quality care. Our patients are students who are experiencing financial challenges. To that end, the charge for health service is reasonable and affordable. We maintain affordable rates because we want to do all that is required to keep our patients healthy. Retention is also a big part of our responsibility in this university environment.

Many of the medical issues confronting our medical center in Houston challenge us here as well. Cost of medical care rises and fewer people have the luxury of being covered under medical insurance. The student health insurance offered by the University is cost effective as well as comprehensive in its coverage. Happily, there has not been a cost increase in our insurance since 2006 and I am happy to say that a contract with our carrier has been recently signed to cover our students for the next two years at no increase in cost. This is major when you realize that so many companies are dropping employees from any health insurance plan coverage. Our university sees the importance of health care coverage and provides an affordable plan to augment good health. Truth is, many students enroll in the minimum six hours just to be eligible for coverage. At \$420 per semester, this is one of the biggest bargains offered campus wide.

The state of Texas is looking at the possibility of allowing students who are insured by carriers other than the school sponsored insurance to use their personal insurance in college health center facilities. The Texas State Legislature is currently reviewing the pros and cons of this suggested state proposed bill. If this bill becomes effective, we in our Health Center will accept "outside insurance" from all patients showing coverage. This new program will require our hiring additional staff to effectively take care of those patients with outside insurance. This would impact our budget and emphasize our need for a bigger facility. It is not an impossible situation but it is going to take some staging and some planning. Currently, we are taking an informal poll in the Health Center just to ascertain how many of our own patients have outside insurance at this time. This result will give us an idea as to numbers who are insured and those who have no insurance at all.

Our work in the Health Center is always focused on the ultimate care of our patient. Our facility is less than adequate for the work which is ours to do. The campus goal is to provide housing for at least 10,000 students on campus. To this end, we are looking at expanding our physical space, offering more services and responding to the medical needs of our patients. We must have a health center in place to adequately care for the increased residential population. As we grow in our service, we grow in importance to our campus. We are a voice to be heard. We can and do make a difference on our campus.

University of Houston Health Center Organizational Chart



Please Note:
* = Non-Benefits Eligible Part-Time Employees

List the objectives that you provided with your 2008-2009 SFAC request. Please comment on your success in achieving these objectives.

New Health Center Facility

Pursue the possibility of building a new Health Center facility. Office of Vice Chancellor/Vice President has recognized the need of a new facility. Office of VC/VP requested that we attend the "HealthCare 2007 Conference/Preparing Today for Healthcare Facilities of the Future". This conference took place in early December 2007. We obtained excellent ideas for planning, design and construction. A new facility would afford us the opportunity to expand services and offer up to date health care.

A number of our staff attended a presentation at University Center for "UC 2010 Initiative", the re-design of UC to educate ourselves in the process of implementing this project. The Health Center Director invited Keith Kowalka, Executive Director University Center, to a Senior Staff meeting to discuss the steps and outline that he and a student led committee followed on their road to the UC Student Referendum. Mr. Kowalka was supportive and assured us that we could call on him for advice. The Health Center Director has contacted and met with a local medical architectural and building firm (Linbeck) for the purpose of seeking a feasibility plan for a new health center. With 10,000 residential students expected, a new health center must be considered.

Accreditation of Health Center by Ambulatory Health Care Association

We have obtained the Accreditation Handbook and a committee has been formed with Chief Physician, James Gray serving as Chair. We are meeting on a regular basis and have set a goal of 1 year to prepare for inspection. This accreditation will enhance the process in achieving Tier One status.

The committee has met on a monthly basis and is in the 14th month of extensive and complicated review following the guidelines of the Accreditation Handbook.

Expansion of our teaching program including Lab and X-ray teaching files

- We currently have Residency contracts with Baylor College of Medicine, University of Texas, Texas Woman's University, University of Texas Austin and are currently processing a contract with University of Texas for nursing program

Residents spend from 2 weeks to a month in the Health Center being educated by our in-house physicians. We now have a contract in place with University of Texas Nursing Program to allow RN's to come into the Health Center to spend 2 weeks to a month with our registered nursing staff. We are currently utilizing the medical, dermatology and orthopedic clinics for students from these various schools.

- Faculty appointment of full time Health Center physicians to University of Texas Health Science Center. The necessary paperwork has been submitted to Dr. Risser at University of Texas.

The Health Center Chief Physician has received a faculty appointment to University of Texas Health Science Center. This allows him to officially serve as a preceptor for all residents doing rotation in our Health Center.

Health Education

- We are working toward a collaboration with UH School of Pharmacy to provide an Educator dedicated to clinical management of diseases

This is on hold due to the former College of Pharmacy Dean, Sunny Ohia, leaving the University of Houston to become Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost at Texas Southern University.

- Research Projects and Medical Case Reporting in Appropriate Journals

The Health Center has been published in the following medical journals:

1. *What caused these linearly distributed papules? Skin and Aging*
2. *Associated Relapsing Umbilical Cellulites: Recurrent omphalitis secondary to hair-containing belly button bezoar. Curtis*
3. *Recurrent Episodes of painful and pruritic red skin lesions. American Journal of Clinical Dermatology*

This has been the work of Health Center Dermatologist, Philip Cohen, M.D., in collaboration with James Gray, M.D.-Health Center Chief Physician and Floyd Robinson-Health Center Director.

- Education and counseling with all free screenings

Last year the Health Center added an additional Free HIV screening day. In addition to National HIV Testing Day and World Aids Day, we will now have a free screening in September (held in October due to Hurricane Ike). We did 275 free HIV screenings. Each person, whether testing Anonymous or Confidential, is counseled prior to the test and when they return for their results. This holds true for all of our free screenings which include:

Free Cholesterol Screening - February

Free Diabetes Screening- March

Free PSA Screening-April

Free HIV Screening-June

Free HIV Screening-September

Free Breast Exams-October

Free Diabetes Screening-November

Free HIV Screening-December

- Increase staff in-service to one per month:

This past year we had the following staff inservice:

January "Men's Clinic", presented by Dr. Powell

June "Sample Medication", presented by Chief Pharmacist, Kizzy Steward and Chief Nurse, Laura Moore

June "CPR/AED", University of Houston Police Department

July "Management of a Difficult Patient", presented by Dr. Powell

August "Confidentiality", presented by Dr. Powell

October "Allergic Reactions", presented by Dr. Medina-Marquis

December "Bloodborne Pathogens", presented by Environmental Health & Risk Management

Embellishment of the University of Houston Curriculum by adding Introduction to Medicine Courses, both Basic and Advanced

There has not been any progress made on this topic.

Information Technology

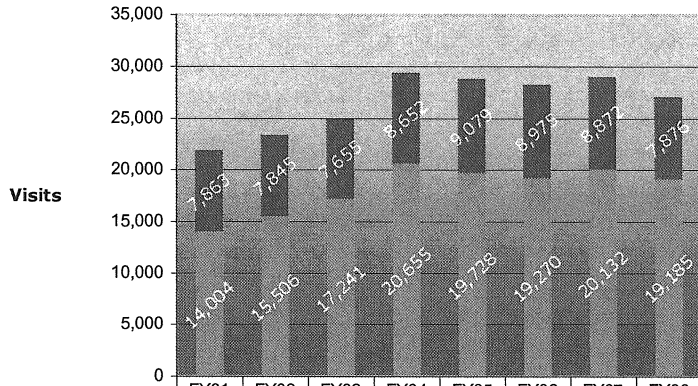
- IT staff to research possibility of Medical Records computer system and Pharmacy computer system sharing information
- IT staff to research implementing online refill request for prescriptions

Health Center Committee met with a representative from NuSoft Express, a company which specializes in Medical Practice Management Software solutions and Medical Billing Software. Health Center committee's consensus is that the implementation of a new system would be much smoother if included in design of new facility.

- Add Health Center forms to website, i.e. medical history, immunization forms etc. for download capability by health center patients

The Health Center recently switched from microfilming of old medical records to having the records put on CD. This change has made it much more efficient in obtaining copies of old medical records when requested by patients or in responding to subpoenas for medical records.

Health Center



Pharmacy Services represent patient visits to the pharmacy only for prescriptions and OTC items.

Medical Clinic Services represent patient visits to the Health Center for Primary Care services, Preventive Services, and Public Health Services.

	FY01	FY02	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08
Pharmacy Only Visits	7,863	7,845	7,655	8,652	9,079	8,975	8,872	7,876
Medical Clinic Visit	14,004	15,506	17,241	20,655	19,728	19,270	20,132	19,185

Fiscal Year

Notes: Fiscal years 02, 03, and 04, the Health Center offered Dermatology services.
 - FY02 => 905 Derm visits for 8 months
 -FY03 => 1,522 Derm visits for 12 months
 -FY04 => 1,214 Derm visits for 10 months
 Fiscal year 05, the Health Center did not offer Dermatology services.
 Fiscal year 06, the Health Center reopened the Dermatology Clinic.
 -FY06 => 71 Derm visits For 1 month
 Fiscal year 06, the campus had an emergency shutdown from September 21, until noon of September 28, due to hurricane Rita resulting in 5 1/2 days of lost productivity for FY06.
 Fiscal year 08, On February 22, 2008, the Health Center lost a psychiatrist. Onward for the duration of FY08, the Health Center was operating minus 1 psychiatrist.

2009 – 2010 OBJECTIVES

New Health Center Facility

In pursuit of achieving this goal, Health Center Director is meeting with a local architectural firm with the intent of getting a feasibility study to present to the Vice Chancellor/Vice President of Student Affairs.

Increase Services

Create space in the design of a new facility for additional services, i.e. Dental Chair, and possibly alternative forms of medicine.

Accreditation of Health Center by Ambulatory Health Care Association

This process requires longer than our goal of 1 year. We will continue to meet on a monthly basis with a completion date of 2010.

Mandatory Insurance

The Health Center is in the process of conducting a survey to determine what percentage of our patients has Student Health Insurance, Other Insurance or No Insurance. The results will impact in numerous ways to include the pursuit of 3rd party billing.

Newsletter

To be used to inform Health Center patients of upcoming events, current health concerns and to educate on health issues. The newsletter is to be published quarterly.

Increase Partnerships

Increase partnerships with other UH departments and outside entities for the purpose of better serving our patient population.

Please describe any overlap between your unit and any other unit(s) providing services to students and the rationale for the overlap.

Animal Care Operations Department-

1. We do physicals for Animal Care personnel
2. Serve as a medical resource

Athletics Department-

1. We provide diagnostic testing for athlete's physicals
2. We do drug testing of athletes for street drugs.
3. We educate athletes in areas such as drug and alcohol use and abuse.
4. Serve as a medical resource.
5. Medical care during games, meets and competitions during Health Center hours as well as x-ray service after hours during home football games.

Campus Recreation and Wellness Center

1. Oversee emergency care education for CPR and Automatic External Defibrillator

Center for Students with Disabilities

2. ACS coordinator works with CSD for accommodation requirements for ACS clients
3. Work with CSD for Disability Awareness Week.
4. Attendant Care Coordinator serves as resource.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

1. Health Center Psychiatrist and psychiatric nurse serve as medical consultants and co-managers of total psychiatric care with Psychologists
2. Work with CAPS for National HIV Testing Day, World Aids Day and National Depression Screening Day to name a few
3. Weekly staffings with CAPS to discuss patient care and prognosis
4. Institutionalizing students.

Dean of Students Office

1. Speak at orientations for freshman, transfer students and parents to familiarize them of the services available to them at the health Center and to provide information on student health insurance
2. Serve as a medical resource

Distance Education

1. Representative present at orientation to provide information on Health Center services and student insurance

Environmental Health & Risk Management

1. Provide Hepatitis B Vaccine to all staff and students that come in contact with blood borne pathogens

International Students Office

1. Speak at orientations for international students to assist in making a smooth transition into our country regarding health issues and health insurance
2. Conduct tours of Health Center of help international students familiarize themselves with health services available to them
3. Serve as information resource on Avian Flu crisis
4. Develop policies and procedure to address health related crisis situations

Language and Culture Center

1. Conduct tours of Health Center to help international students familiarize themselves with health services available to them
2. Assist in specifically designing health insurance plan for students

Law School

1. Speak at orientation to assist with student insurance enrollment and to market our facility

Nutrition and Foods Program

1. We utilize the students to provide a free Nutritionist Clinic to UH students while providing the program a learning ground for NFP students

Optometry

1. Diabetes screening
2. TB screening
3. Required immunizations
4. Speak at orientation to assist with student insurance enrollment and to market our facility

Police Department

1. Physicals for recruits
2. Police Oral Review Board
3. Medical resource for the department

Residential Life and Housing

1. Provide in-service to students in residential halls as requested
2. Assist in RA training
3. RA Resource EXPO
4. Serve as a medical resource
5. Speaker for BEST programs

School of Pharmacy

1. Required immunizations
2. TB screenings

Special Events

1. Provide first aid station for commencement exercises
2. Cougar First Impression

Student's Association

1. First Aid station at Frontier Fiesta

Wellness Center

1. Health Fairs
2. National HIV Testing
3. World AIDS Day
4. National Depression Day
5. Resource
6. Referral Service

Women's Resource Center

1. Provide speaker and source for Women's Health issues.

The Daily Cougar > News
Center offers free cholesterol testing

Cougar News Services

Published: Friday, February 15, 2008

Had enough of that Valentine's Day rich dinner and candy? The UH Health Center is offering free cholesterol screenings today from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with photo identification.

Cholesterol screening requires drawing blood from one's arm, unlike a diabetes screening in which blood is drawn from a person's finger.

Fasting for eight to 10 hours is an option for those interested in participating, but is not required for the screening, Health Center office assistant Joe Pierce said.

"(We) get the best (cholesterol) reading if one fasts," Pierce said.

People who do not fast must refrain from eating or drinking for a minimum of two hours, Pierce said.

According to the American Heart Association, two types of cholesterol can be measured.

To determine one's cholesterol level, a blood sample is taken and analyzed for high- and low-density lipoproteins as well as body fats called triglycerides.

Healthy individuals ideally have approximately 200 milligrams or less of the harmful LDL cholesterol, according to the AHA Web site.

Healthy women ideally have 50 milligrams or less of the healthy HDL while men usually have 40 milligrams or less of HDL.

Triglyceride levels are ideally less than 150 milligrams in both men and women, according to the AHA.

Results will be available Tuesday because of the amount of attendance expected, which will take time to process. Last spring, 169 faculty, staff and students were screened for cholesterol, Pierce said.

For more information, call 713 743-5155.

STD findings no shock to officials

Debi Ostrom

Published: Thursday, April 3, 2008

UH Health Center officials said they were not surprised by the findings of a recent study that revealed one-fourth of American teenage females have a sexually transmitted disease.

Director of the UH Health Center Floyd Robinson and Chief Nurse Laura Moore said they diagnose someone with an STD every day, some not for the first time.

"Students on this campus are having sex, and it's unprotected," Moore said. "The results would probably be the same. If their friends are doing it, they are going to do it."

The study by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention found that 26 percent of 838 females between the ages of 14 to 19 had an STD. Proportionately, that is 3 million teenage females nationwide, the study said.

A UH science junior said she had her first and only herpes outbreak after being with her boyfriend for a year. She said she contracted the disease from her boyfriend through oral sex.

"It was one of the most painful things I have ever been through," she said. "I couldn't walk and I developed a bacterial infection to go along with it."

Since her first outbreak, she has had to call her doctor twice because she thought she was getting an outbreak, and said her life has changed dramatically.

"I feel like I will never be able to be intimate with anyone but my boyfriend," she said. "I'm not planning to be intimate with anyone else, but what would I do if we broke up? I would be too embarrassed to have to tell someone I was interested in that I had an STD." Her boyfriend, a science senior, said she dealt with it wonderfully, but can't describe how guilty he feels. He said he hates that she is labeled with an STD and that people would judge her for it.

"It was terrible to watch her like that," he said. "She went through a month-long depression, and I felt like I couldn't say anything to her. I caused, it and it was terrible."

More women come into the Health Center to be tested but that does not mean more women than men are infected with STDs, Moore said.

"Women are always smarter about changes with their body. They will come in before symptoms show or progress," Moore said.

"Men think it will go away on its own."

Health Center officials said they see the same patients come in with an STD after already having been treated. Moore said she has had to treat the same people month after month until they come in with an incurable disease.

It is impossible to tell if someone has an STD by looks alone, Robinson and Moore said. Many patients are married or in monogamous relationships, and some are recently divorced.

A UH accounting junior said she found out she had genital warts after dating her boyfriend for several months. She said they decided a few months into their relationship to start having sex, and she was diagnosed at a regular checkup a few months after.

"It sucks and it's scary," she said. "It's like the worst feeling and I didn't know how to tell my parents."

Her parents were shocked and confused, she said. Her mom supported her through the ordeal, but she said it has changed her relationship with her father.

"Be careful, whether it's your boyfriend, a friend or a one-night stand," she said. "It could happen to anyone. I never thought in my wildest dreams that it could happen to me."

Robinson and Moore said the rise in STDs could be attributed to different factors, including a lack of education from schools and parents. They said while educating students about abstinence is good, it should not be the only thing students are taught.

"People have to take the blinders off," Robinson said. "Abstinence is not being practiced. People foolishly think that it is."

The UH science junior said she felt her sex education failed her. She said it should be more extensive and show teenagers what is out there and how to prevent it.

"I was always told, 'Don't have sex because you may get pregnant,'" she said. "I was taught a little about STDs in school but never how easy it was to get one."

Director of the Women's Resource Center Beverly McPhail said she is appalled at how little people in a society that claims to be sexually liberated know. Society's biases put women in a tricky place when it comes to being prepared and protected, McPhail said.

"Women don't have the power to ask for protection," McPhail said. "If they are prepared, they look like a whore. They have to play the virgin."

The Health Center provides information and the opportunity for candid discussion, Moore said. She said friends and the Internet often provide misleading and false information. Commercials for STD medication, such as Valtrex, which treats genital herpes, are also misleading, Moore said. The Valtrex commercials show couples where one person has herpes and one doesn't, but in a happy go-lucky sort of way, she said.

"They don't show the lesions and the pain they can endure," Moore said. "An outbreak can be life debilitating. And you can be on medication and still get outbreaks."

Additional reporting by Hannah Eastham and Dominic Dames

The Daily Cougar > Opinion

Staff editorial: Sex education in schools needs an overhaul

Published: Saturday, April 5, 2008

In the span of three days, a pair of 14-year-old girls from Houston each attempted to abandon infants they said they didn't know they were carrying. Both cases raise the question of whether sex education in Houston schools is failing students.

On Thursday, an 8th grader at Cedar Bayou Junior School in Baytown excused herself from class to go to the bathroom where she delivered a baby boy, the Houston Chronicle reported. The teenage mother then tried to flush her baby down the toilet, but another student, who had been in the bathroom while the mother was in labor, ran to tell the school nurse, police said. The nearly full-term infant died in the bathroom and an autopsy later confirmed that the baby boy was alive when the mother attempted to flush him down the toilet, police said.

The girl told police she didn't know she was pregnant, and people who knew her said they never noticed, because she usually wore baggy clothes.

Another 14-year-old gave birth to a stillborn baby on an airplane and then discarded the body in the waste bin, the Chronicle reported Monday.

The eighth grader was returning to Houston from a school trip to New York with a group of middle school students. She also told police she didn't know she was pregnant.

These two tragic cases occurred because both teenage girls were not aware of any options available to them. A mother at Cedar Bayou Junior School told the Chronicle that the school district teaches abstinence-based sex education classes, but cases like these do nothing to reinforce their effectiveness.

A study also showed that one-fourth of female teenagers in America has a sexually transmitted disease. The director of the UH Health Center, Floyd Robinson, told The Daily Cougar ("STD findings no shock to officials", News, Thursday) that students practicing abstinence is not necessarily the reality.

"People have to take the blinders off," Robinson said. "Abstinence is not being practiced. People foolishly think that it is."

It's time our school districts recognize that teenagers are having sex and will continue to have sex, whether or not they are informed of all the consequences. Limiting sex education to abstinence-only methods will continue to result in such unfortunate stories.

The Daily Cougar > News

Students push for birth control bill

Supporters seeking lower costs say other contraceptives not as effective, urge others to contact senator for support

Debi Ostrom

Published: Tuesday, April 15, 2008

UH students are promoting the Prevention Through Affordable Access Act to lower prices in university health centers across the country since birth control costs increased last summer.

"In order to build successful careers and families at a time that's right for them, students need access to affordable birth control," said Meggin Baxter, public affairs field manager for Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas.

The Federal Deficit Reduction Act, signed by President Bush in 2005 and enacted in January 2007, ended the birth control discounts offered to university health centers and clinics nationwide by raising costs of manufacturer prices. This caused an increase in prices to consumers, college students and the uninsured.

Before the FDRA passed, students could purchase certain brands for \$10 per month, but once the legislation went into effect in January 2007, the price jumped to \$35, said Kizzy Steward-Judie, chief pharmacist at the UH Health Center. The price increased again in Jan. 2008 to \$40 - an aggregate 400 percent increase in cost for students.

Planned Parenthood is working with student organization VOX: Voices for Planned Parenthood to have Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, co-sponsor the bill that, if passed, would provide affordable birth control for women.

The group will have a rally from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday beside the Philip Guthrie Hoffman Hall to encourage students to call Hutchison in support of the bill.

In 1990, Congress passed the Medicaid Anti-Discriminatory Drug Price and Patient Restoration Act, which ensured Medicaid recipients received the lowest drug prices in the marketplace, Baxter said.

It also enabled pharmaceutical companies to offer cheaper drugs to charitable organizations and clinics.

Congress passed the DRA because manufacturers were suspected of offering nominal pricing to entities beyond those originally intended by the 1990 bill, Baxter said. The result is driving up costs for about 500,000 to 750,000 women in America, she said.

Media production senior Alison Haines said taking birth control makes life a little less uncertain, even though she is married.

"Though there are other methods just as effective as far as preventing birth, they may not have the recent added bonuses of fewer periods, menstrual cramps, or anything else that we females endure, and my birth control definitely subtracts stress from my life with these added benefits," Haines said.

The cost at the UH Health Center is less than Haines' previous health insurance, but the cost at the center has increased since the passing of the DRA.

The UH Health Center is selling Cyclessa and Desogen at \$25, the same price for the generic equivalent, as long as supplies last.

The center is also offering female condoms as another affordable option, although they are not very popular, said Steward-Judie, who oversees operations in the pharmacy daily.

Steward-Judie said she sees no benefits to the current legislation's consequences: an increase of unwanted pregnancies and loss of patients for the Health Center. She recommends that students take a more active approach and voice their concerns to state representatives.

"Birth control is basic health care," Baxter said. "These high prices mean the difference between putting food on the table and buying prescription medication. The best way to build healthy families is to put prevention first. The DRA does the opposite."

The unfortunate consequence of fewer students and uninsured women taking birth control is the increase of abortions and emergency contraceptives, political science sophomore Diane Aguirre, president of VOX at UH, said.

Oral contraceptives not only prevent pregnancy, but they also help regulate the menstrual cycle, alleviate severe premenstrual syndrome and can help treat diseases, Aguirre said. Illnesses such as polycystic ovary syndrome, where cysts build over released eggs, causing irregular menstruation; and endometriosis, a condition in which uterine tissue grows outside the uterus and other areas, can cause tumors, pain and infertility if not treated, according to www.womenshealth.gov.

"Women will have to use more affordable, but less effective birth control to prevent pregnancies," Aguirre said about the hike in prices. "It could also lead to an increase in the number of women who leave school because of unintended pregnancies."

Debi Ostrom & Dominic Dames

Published: **Tuesday, April 22, 2008**

The UH student health insurance plan is tailor-made for students' needs and budgets, officials say. Some students agree, but others say the price is too high.

Student insurance is an important part of the health care system, said Mary Ann Maher, president of insurance provider Macori Inc. UH health insurance is designed to compliment the services offered at the University Health Center, and provides Preferred Provider Organization coverage 24 hours a day, worldwide, Maher said.

A PPO plan, like a Health Maintenance Organization plan, has contractual agreements with insurance companies but is more loosely organized than an HMO, according to www.healthinsurance.about.com. PPO patients can visit physicians they want, but pay more out-of-pocket expenses visiting an out-of-network doctor.

The UH student health insurance is offered for \$840 per academic school year to students enrolled in six or more hours in a semester or three during the summer, Maher said. "Our plan is much less than most college campuses because a University committee plans the coverage and we realize that we must get the most for our money in regard to students," University Health Center Director Floyd Robinson said.

Geophysics sophomore Michael Sares said his health insurance provider from South Africa provides sufficient coverage for his needs.

"If I didn't have it through my company, I would (get UH insurance)," he said. Entrepreneurship and finance senior Maria Martotell said the price was good.

"It sounds like a good price compared to what it costs to get any kind of service at UH," she said. "I mean, compared to parking (at) \$200 a year, \$800 doesn't seem that bad. I know individual health care is really expensive if you try to buy it yourself, especially if you really need health coverage."

Macori, Inc., administers health care for other universities, including Texas A&M University, University of Texas and Baylor University, among others.

"Health care is very expensive and often students not insured have to make the decision to leave school in order to pay for the illness they are combating," Robinson said.

Young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 years have the highest risk of being uninsured in Texas, Maher said, citing the Texas Department of Insurance.

Nutrition junior Christine McArthur said she wasn't aware that UH offered student health insurance, but can't afford it although it sounded like a good deal.

"I have a doctor at my church that has a private practice that knows my situation," she said. "When I get sick, which is rare, he helps me out."

Geology junior Fritz Holmstrom, who has insurance with his family, said he didn't think UH insurance was very affordable.

"I wouldn't (enroll) because I couldn't pay," he said.

The insurance covers items with co-pay, including X-rays, laboratory and doctor's fees, for a \$10 co-pay. A doctor's visit costs \$15 without insurance. The insurance also covers the Human Papillomavirus vaccine with \$25 co-pay, which costs \$153 without insurance.

Some services offered by the University Health Center aren't covered by the insurance, such as allergy injections, regular pap smears, doctor fees, immunizations and over-the-counter medications, according to the benefit booklet available at www.macori.com/States/TX/UHMain.asp.

Robinson said the most common elective treatments they see are students seeking physicals or check-ups to make sure they are healthy. The insurance covers maternity costs and infant health care for 31 days. In-patient mental disorders are covered up to \$4,000 a year.

The insurance covers 80 percent for an accident or illness up to \$50,000 with a \$250 deductible for outpatient treatment per policy year and \$150 deductible for inpatient treatment. Other students said while insurance is good to have, it is too expensive to afford. "It's a lot of money," finance junior Yousef El-Amadi said. "I still say it's expensive because we are students."

The policy year for the UH insurance plan ends Aug. 19, even if a student graduates in May, according to Macori, Inc.'s Web site. Students seeking coverage after summer or who want to re-enroll must do so by May 29.

Other benefits of the plan include a \$500 allowance for prescriptions and possible patient assistance programs, according to the booklet.

Chief Pharmacist Kizzy Steward-Judie handles student insurance plans at the UH Health Center. Students who enroll in the plan get a \$500 allowance for medication. If students use their allowance before the one-year plan ends, they might have the option to enroll in patient assistance programs, Steward-Judie said.

"The \$500 allowance captures a full year's time, (for example,) August to August," Steward-Judie said.

Insured students provide co-pay and then the student insurance pays the remaining amount, according to the benefit booklet.

"If the cost of (medicine) is \$125 and their co-pay was \$25, the \$100 goes into the allowance," Steward-Judie said.

The medication co-pay is a set price depending on whether it is a name brand or a generic brand.

"Students would have a co-pay of \$25 if a brand medication, generic is \$15," Steward-Judie said. "(Medicine) less than \$15 dollars they just pay outright."

Students pay for medications that have a minimal cost of \$25 or under, such as antibiotics. Since the student covers the cost, nothing would come out of the allowance.

Students get a month's supply of medication at a time and if the allotment runs out before the year ends, they can qualify for patients assistance programs.

"If students' \$500 max is reached sooner, there are options in patients assistance programs where they can get some (medicine) at a discounted price or even free. Stipulations involve no generics. (The program) doesn't involve our pharmacy, it is set up with the drug manufacturer," Steward-Judie said.

Students have until the 20th day of class in the spring and fall semesters to enroll in the plan, according to the UH Web site. During summer sessions, the deadline is the 12th day of class.

For more information or to sign up, students can visit the Student Health Insurance office in the University Health Center. For more information, call (713) 743-5137 or visit the student health insurance Web site at <http://www.macori.com/States/TX/UHMain.asp>.

Additional reporting by Bayan Raji

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Planned Parenthood to open site near UH

New location will provide easier access to services, spokeswoman says; two smaller clinics planned

Amenah Khalil

Published: Thursday, July 10, 2008

UH and its surrounding community will soon find Planned Parenthood and its services a stone's throw away.

For students, this will mean easier access to services such as annual pelvic exams, pregnancy counseling, an abortion clinic and other services not provided by the University Health Center.

"For students who are not eligible to use our services, such as UH alumni and their peers, Planned Parenthood will provide another option that is in a familiar area," University Health Center Chief Nurse Laura Moore said.

The center's Women's Clinic offers some services provided by Planned Parenthood, such as annual exams, pap smears, testing for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, among other services, Women's Clinic Nurse Practitioner Virginia Miller said.

For students who use Planned Parenthood for yearly exams and other services, the new location, slated for 4600 Gulf Freeway, near Texas Spur 5 and across from UH, will be well-received.

"I think that Planned Parenthood's services are beneficial to college women," biology senior Ruby Phillip said. "As future professionals, we would want to choose whether or not to have a baby at this time. Planned Parenthood's new location near UH and TSU is well-situated."

The new, six-story, 75,000-square-foot location will be larger and have a more contemporary design. Unlike the location at 3601 Fannin St., the new building will also have an on-site parking garage. The organization hopes the modern interior will attract both affluent and low-income patients.

"We're expanding our facilities to serve the growing Houston community. The new location will provide greater accessibility to our clients," Planned Parenthood spokeswoman Laura Leon said.

With more than 860 affiliate clinics, Planned Parenthood is the largest reproductive health care organization in the United States. The organization provides well-woman exams, birth control

pills, condoms, breast exams, HIV/AIDS testing, pregnancy testing and abortions, among others.

In 2006, abortion services accounted for 6 percent of all services provided by the Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas.

Biology junior Kristen Rillieux said the proximity of the clinic to the campus would only benefit female students.

"It's better for women to perform abortions with information rather than without it," Rillieux said.

In addition to its Gulf Freeway location, Planned Parenthood is also planning to open two smaller clinics, which will not perform abortions, to serve suburban Houston locations.

Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas, Inc., is working to raise \$16.5 million to complete the new center.

The organization has received numerous contributions, including an \$850,000 challenge grant from the Kresge Foundation and additional grants from the Brown Foundation, Houston Endowment and the Cullen Trust for Health Care.

"Planned Parenthood has been around for quite some time and those who have used their services in the past will continue to do so," University Health Center Director Floyd Robinson said. "The fact that they are now neighbors to the University of Houston will make it convenient for those who want to continue utilizing their services."

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FDA considers Gardasil for men

Cancer, warts preventable with shots; FDA approval pending

Amenah Khalil

Published: Monday, July 21, 2008

Even though both females and males are susceptible to genital warts and other less common cancers resulting from the human papillomavirus, only females between the ages of 9 and 26 have been eligible to receive Gardasil, the HPV vaccine, since its Food and Drug Administration approval in 2006.

Gardasil, the treatment of choice to prevent most HPV infections, could be FDA-approved for males by 2009, as reported by The New York Times on Feb. 24.

Although the main side effect of HPV for men is genital warts, some rare types of cancers also pose a threat and vaccinating men would also mean protecting their sexual partners from the risk of acquiring cervical cancer.

"Obviously, the best protection against HPV infections is abstinence. But, of course, not many people do that," said Mike, an economics senior. "So I think that as long as it's safe, Gardasil should be available for males so that they would be just as proactive about preventing this infection as women are."

The Department of Health and Human Services reported that in addition to the 20 million Americans living with HPV today, despite the availability of an HPV vaccine, this year alone, an estimated 6.2 million Americans will be infected with the virus. In an effort to combat this potentially deadly virus, the University Health Center provides female students, staff and faculty with Gardasil vaccines that can prevent this infection from occurring.

HPV is present in more than 40 types and is the most widespread sexually transmitted infection. Even though many people infected with HPV will not express symptoms, certain strains can cause serious health problems - mainly genital warts and cervical cancer. In fact, all genital warts and about 70 percent of cervical cancers are caused by HPV infections.

"I think that it's important for women to protect themselves against HPV by getting the vaccine," Women's Resource Center Director Beverly McPhail said. "However, I disagree with the apparent belief that women are the sole vectors of transmission. HPV is an infection that is transmitted by both sexes, therefore both males and females should be able to protect themselves and their partners from HPV."

Female students, staff and faculty between the ages of 17 and 26 can take the initiative to protect themselves against HPV infections with a simple visit to the University Health Center. Two years ago, the University Health Center was successful in its endeavor to make Gardasil affordable for students, University Health Center Director Floyd Robinsons said.

"Now students would pay only \$35 per injection, which includes office visits and pharmacy co-pay, instead of \$173 per visit," Robinson said.

However, for students without student health insurance, injections will cost \$173 per visit, a total of \$519 for the complete series of vaccinations.

"Even though I don't have the student health insurance, I still think that it's important to get vaccinated for HPV," political science senior Annie Noorany.

Student health insurance will be \$420 for fall 2008 and \$420 for spring and summer 2009. The cost of student health insurance for the summer only is \$210.

The majority of students with other types of health insurance plans may also be able to receive the vaccination for little or no charge.

"We cover Gardasil for all fully-insured Humana members ages 9 through 26 who do not have contraindication to the vaccine's administration," said Humana spokesman Ross McLerran.

For McPhail, educating students is crucial to the prevention of infectious diseases.

"I know some girls who say they can tell whether their partner has STD's just by looking at them," McPhail said. "Our challenge is to help young people who are sexually active to open up about sexually transmitted diseases. It's imperative for them to feel that their sexual health is important."

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Free campus HIV screening today

Sexually active population should test at least once every 6 months

Rachel Chan

Published: Friday, October 10, 2008

UH Health Center officials urge students to take advantage of free HIV testing from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today.

University Health Center will administer free HIV screenings to students, faculty and staff from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today.

Health Center Director Floyd Robinson initiated free HIV testing at UH fifteen years ago when the UH Health Center saw a small number of people getting tested for HIV.

Convinced HIV was on campus, Robinson attributed the lack of involvement to cost and sought permission from UH administration to eliminate the \$15 fee.

"My feeling is not that we try to limit those who get tested, but for those who need to get tested, we test them. It is all part of education," Robinson said.

In the midst of advancing technology, the Internet serves as a portal for young men and women to meet, but is unfortunately overrun with chat lines that promote sexual activity, Robinson said.

"We are seeing more HIV in young gay men because it is so easy with the computer system. Chat lines are easy," Robinson said. "Very rarely is the question posed are you HIV positive or HIV negative?"

The Elisa antibody test will be used to determine the results. The test has a 5 percent inaccuracy rate because of the window period of three to six months. Within six months, the body should develop sufficient antibodies for the test to conclude if the antibodies are infected. The test may also return a "false positive" in about 0.0004 to 0.0007 percent of cases in the United States.

Chief Nurse Laura Moore urges people who are sexually active to get tested every six months.

"If you are going to be sexually active, you need to be smart and make sure you are taking precautions," Moore said. "Part of being smart is coming in and getting tested every six months if you are sexually active."

Even though the test is offered at no cost, students who test HIV positive will have to pay \$65 for a Western blot confirmation test.

Both the Elisa and the Western blot do not detect viruses. They instead use protein reaction indicators to verify the presence of infected HIV antibodies. The Elisa detects one subset of antibodies, with the Western blot detecting several more through a more comprehensive process, to confirm Elisa positives.

At the onset of HIV, a person may go through night sweats and fatigue similar to the flu. Persons who are sexually active and suffer from tiredness and night sweats should receive testing.

Students can opt to take either anonymous or confidential testing. Anonymous testing does not require a name. Instead, the individual will be assigned a series of numbers. Upon collection of results, records will be shredded and the individual will not receive a copy. Confidential testing, however, requires identification and test results will be attached to medical records at the Health Center.

Based upon the volume of labs, test results should be ready by Monday.

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UH to offer free breast exams

Published: Monday, October 13, 2008

UH health care professionals will administer free breast exams to all UH students, faculty and staff from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. today at the UH Health Center. Free breast exams will also be given from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Oct. 22. For more information, call (713) 743-5156 or visit www.uh.edu/admin/hc/.

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Clinic offers community flu shots

Health officials warn of college student susceptibility

Josh Malone

Published: Tuesday, November 11, 2008

Pounding headaches, a sense of fatigue and an uneasy stomach aren't just indicators of the coming stretch of exams. They're also the beginning symptoms of influenza, an illness students are encouraged to prepare for as its most contagious season begins to ramp up. Influenza, commonly referred to as the flu, is easily preventable but still affects anywhere from 5 to 20 percent of the population annually, resulting in about 226,000 hospital visits and 36,000 deaths yearly, according to the Centers for Disease Control. The illness spreads most frequently during flu season, defined as October through February.

Dr. Latha Brubaker, Houston Area medical director for health-care provider Concentra, said younger and elderly age groups are more at risk for the flu, but college students face unique risks, as well.

"College students are in an extremely close proximity to other students, and with (the flu) being highly contagious, it puts them at risk. It's recommended that everyone gets the flu vaccine because anyone can be exposed," Brubaker said.

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness spread mostly from coughing and sneezing of those carrying the virus. The vaccine is approved for anyone above six months of age and works by triggering the body's immune system.

Upon receiving the vaccine, containing an already "killed" form of the virus, the body builds antibodies to protect against similar attacks.

Brubaker recognizes the reluctance in getting vaccinated, but said much of the unwillingness comes from falsehoods surrounding the vaccine.

"I've found that many believe they can catch the flu from the vaccine, and this is the biggest myth. It's an inactive virus in the vaccine, so it's virtually impossible to get the flu itself. Another misconception is that only those in cold-weather climate can contract the illness, but the virus exists in every climate," Brubaker said.

Several pharmacies advertise vaccines in response to the flu season, but students who prefer to stay on campus can visit the University Health Center, said Chief Nurse Laura Moore.

Moore said the University Health Center offers flu shots to all students, staff and faculty. The vaccine is \$16 for all patients; it is not covered by the health center's student insurance plan. Those seeking a flu shot are required to bring a valid picture and be willing to wait 15 minutes following the injection in the event of an unexpected reaction.

Moore encourages any student who suspects they have contracted the disease to seek immediate attention.

"If someone suspects they have the flu we encourage them to come in to the health center and see one of our physicians. Sometimes you can have another illness, but symptoms mimic the flu and depending on the illness you may need different treatment than what would be given for the flu," Moore said.

Student response to receiving the vaccination was mixed.

Business sophomore James Pham said he didn't see the need.

"Maybe I should, but I sometimes wonder if it's blown out of proportion. I don't think I will (get vaccinated)," Pham said.

Kelley Williams, a biology freshman, said she received the vaccination weeks ago.

"It's something my parents remind me about, and while I haven't gotten sick, I understand it. I've seen people with the flu, and it's not something I want to go through, especially now," Williams said.