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# Health board approves agreement with Texas Tech Health Sciences Center

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The Lubbock Board of Health wants to offer fellows in the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center the opportunity to work within the Department of Health.

On Monday, board members reviewed and approved an agreement with the Health Sciences Center Department of Internal Medicine Residency Program.

The proposed infectious disease

fellowship program would provide fellows with learning opportunities in the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases at the health department's STD clinic.

Dr. Steven Presley, chairman of the board will present the agreement to Lubbock City Council at its meeting Thursday morning.

Nobody from HSC attended the meeting. Board members had the agreement only, but not the paperwork accompanying the proposal, leaving open questions like legal liability and the Health Department's role in the project.

"If we're acting on something, we should at least be able to look at why we're acting on it," board member Dr. Donald May said. "We're a deliberative body, and I think that's treating us with great disrespect if we don't have that."

Board members were under the impression that the proposal was for a grant, not a program — something Dr. Steven Berk, dean of the TTUHSC School of Medicine and provost of the HSC, believed was clear before the meeting.

He said he did not attend the meeting because he discussed the program with Mayor Tom Martin, city council member Jim Gilbreath, city attorney Sam Medina and Presley on Wednesday.

There is no request for funding, Berk said.



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“What we’ve asked is this: We are trying to get approval for an infectious disease fellowship. We don’t have an infectious disease fellowship now, but we’d like to get approval from the (Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education). Part of what a fellow needs to do is have an experience in sexually transmitted diseases, so what we wanted to do was to have the fellow work at the sexually transmitted disease clinic.”

Berk said the school’s dermatology program has an agreement with the health department, allowing dermatology residents to work at the clinic.

May said he believes the program would have many benefits for medical students and residents involved, but without the specification of figures, dates and provisions, the agreement is poorly executed.

Berk explained fellows would work half a day or one day a week at the clinic under the supervision of infectious disease faculty. Fellows would have their own malpractice insurance and would not be paid.

The work in the STD clinic would be a very small part of the fellows’ two-year curriculum, he said.

The health board meeting was called on short notice because the application for fellowship in infectious disease clinic had to be submitted this week, Berk said. The school made a request to have the letter of agreement signed weeks ago, he said, and because of the controversy surrounding the health department, there has been a lot of confusion.

“We just needed a letter from them saying it would be OK for the fellow to participate in the sexually transmitted disease clinic, just like the dermatology resident already does. There is nothing controversial about this request,” he said.

After the meeting, Presley, also an associate professor within the Texas Tech Institute of Environmental and Human Health, said the issues of concern probably will be addressed during the city council meeting.

“As long as all the bases are covered, it will help with the surveillance. ... It helps in the long run,” he said. “The more people you have working on public health issues, the better it is.”

Presley said the realization that the proposal was for a program, not a grant, does not affect the outcome of the Board of Health meeting.

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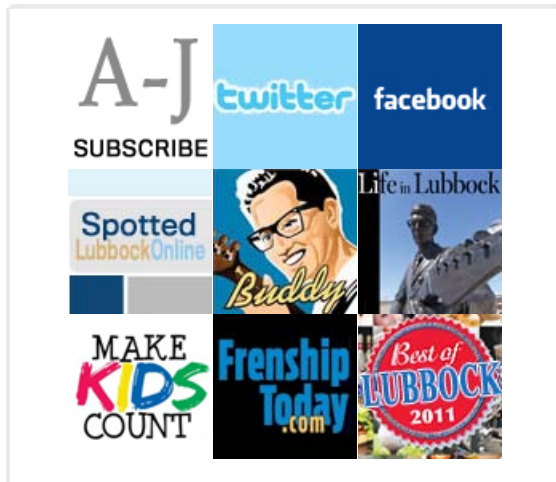
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