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## City council to decide fate of health deal

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Posted: Wednesday, November 30, 2011 11:48 pm

By Caitlan Osborn  
News Editor | 0 comments

The Lubbock City Council will determine today whether to approve the request made by members of Texas Tech's University Health Sciences Center to give infectious disease fellows the opportunity to work with the Lubbock Health Department's STD clinic.

Bridget Faulkenberry, director of the health department, said if the proposal is approved, HSC students will be able to shadow nurses at the department while learning how to test for STDs and treat them.

"We're very excited for this opportunity because the more people are educated about STDs, the better," Faulkenberry said.

Steven Presley, an associate professor with the Institute of Environmental and Human Health at Tech, said a group at the HSC Department of Internal Medicine's residency program had proposed a letter of agreement with the City of Lubbock. Afterward, Lubbock Mayor Tom Martin asked the Board of Health to review the letter and make a recommendation.

Presley, also a chairman on the Board of Health, said the board approved the agreement on Monday despite some initial confusion concerning rumors about the role of the department and its STD clinic.

"All of the controversy and confusion was really a product of misinformation and bad communication," he said. "The Health Department was never going to shut it down. They were just trying to (make it more efficient)."


Presley also said some members of the Board of Health thought the agreement was for the approval of a grant and not a program, but this did not affect the overall outcome of the proposal.

"Whether it is a program or a grant, it doesn't make a difference," he said. "An agreement is an agreement."

Steven Berk, dean of the HSC School of Medicine, said the program will involve experienced students who have already completed basic medical training.

"They have graduated from medical school, have gone through three years of residency and need to go through two years of fellowship, which we are hoping part of which will be at the STD clinic," he said. "They are very well-

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trained physicians.

To the medical school, the request to the city was pretty straightforward, Berk said, and the fellowship would be mutually beneficial for Texas Tech and the City of Lubbock.

He said the city currently allows the school's dermatology program to work at the STD clinic, so hopefully infectious disease personnel can be allowed as well.

Berk also mentioned how there is no request for funding and that the fellows would be unpaid.

"If the city doesn't want to approve it, (our fellows) will just get the experience some other way, whether it's in Dallas or Austin," Berk said, "but we'd rather get approved by the city (because) it will have very positive benefits. There are no negative benefits to the city whatsoever."

Presley said the city's approval would provide members of the HSC with great experiences.

"I think it will be an opportunity for infectious disease fellows — whether they graduated from Texas Tech or somewhere else — to actually experience what it is like in a sexually transmitted disease clinic," he said. "The classroom is always different from real life, no matter how real they try to make it. It's a chance for the students to expand their horizons while experiencing real-world issues."

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