

Access to Women's Health Care in Lubbock County

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Study Question and Background

With increasing physician shortages, particularly in primary care fields and overwhelmingly in rural areas, access to care is becoming an ever-growing barrier to ideal health outcomes in patients. For example, the city of Lubbock itself has a relative abundance of medical resources but the rest of Lubbock county is quite sparse in regard to medical care. With this project we sought to determine how far people living in these rural communities have to travel to access medical care in the form of PCPs, pharmacies, or hospitals..

Study Population

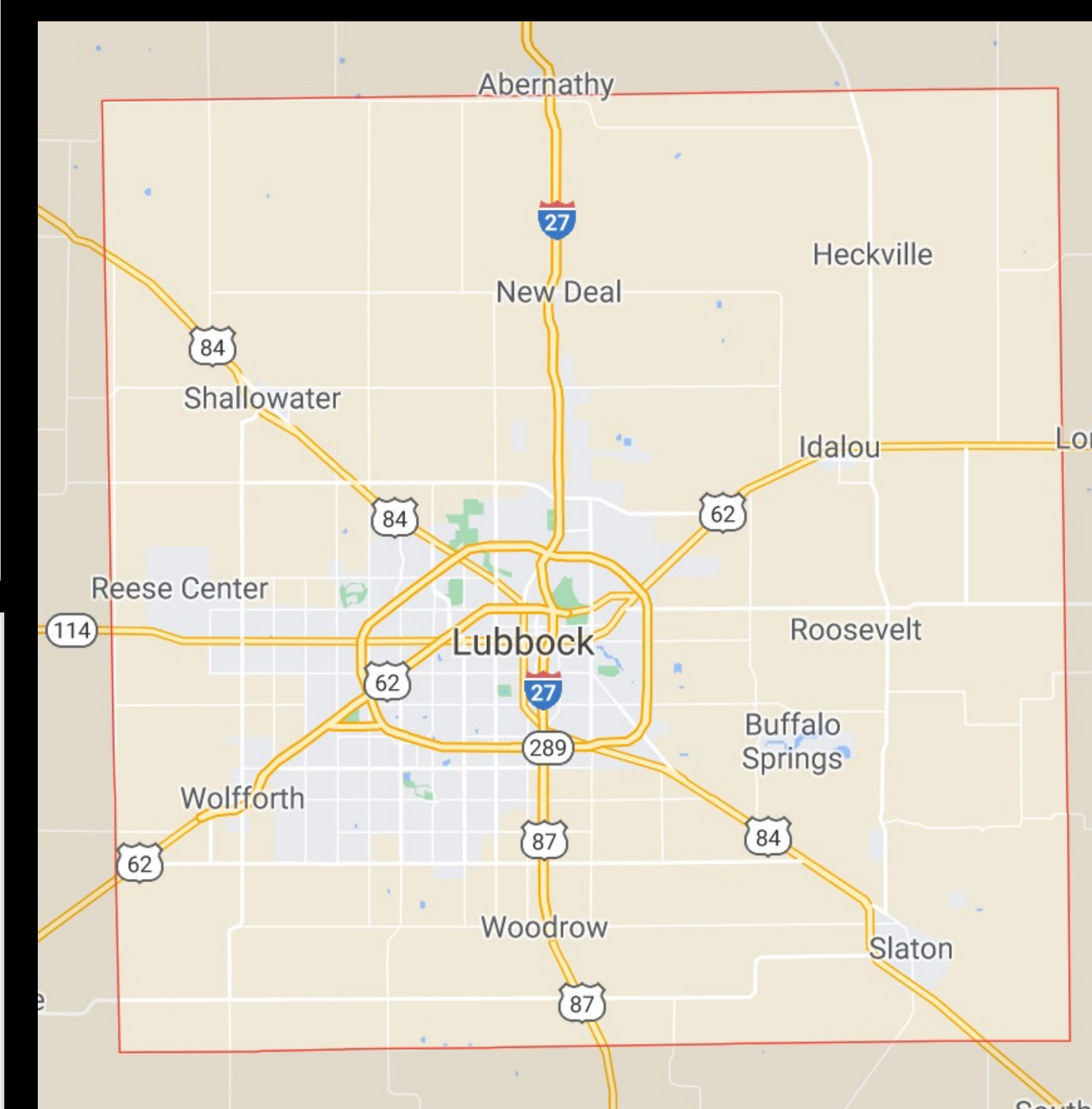
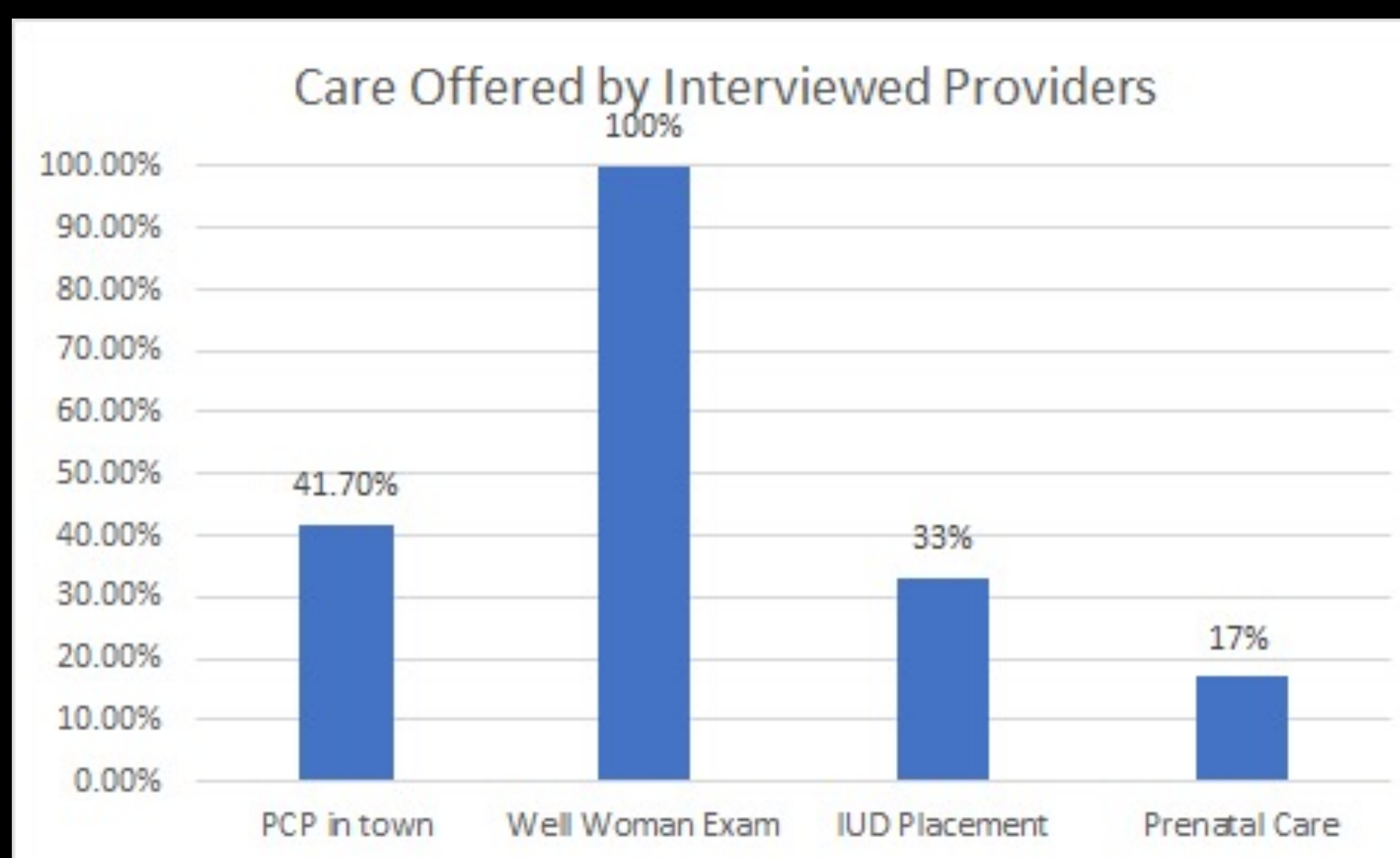
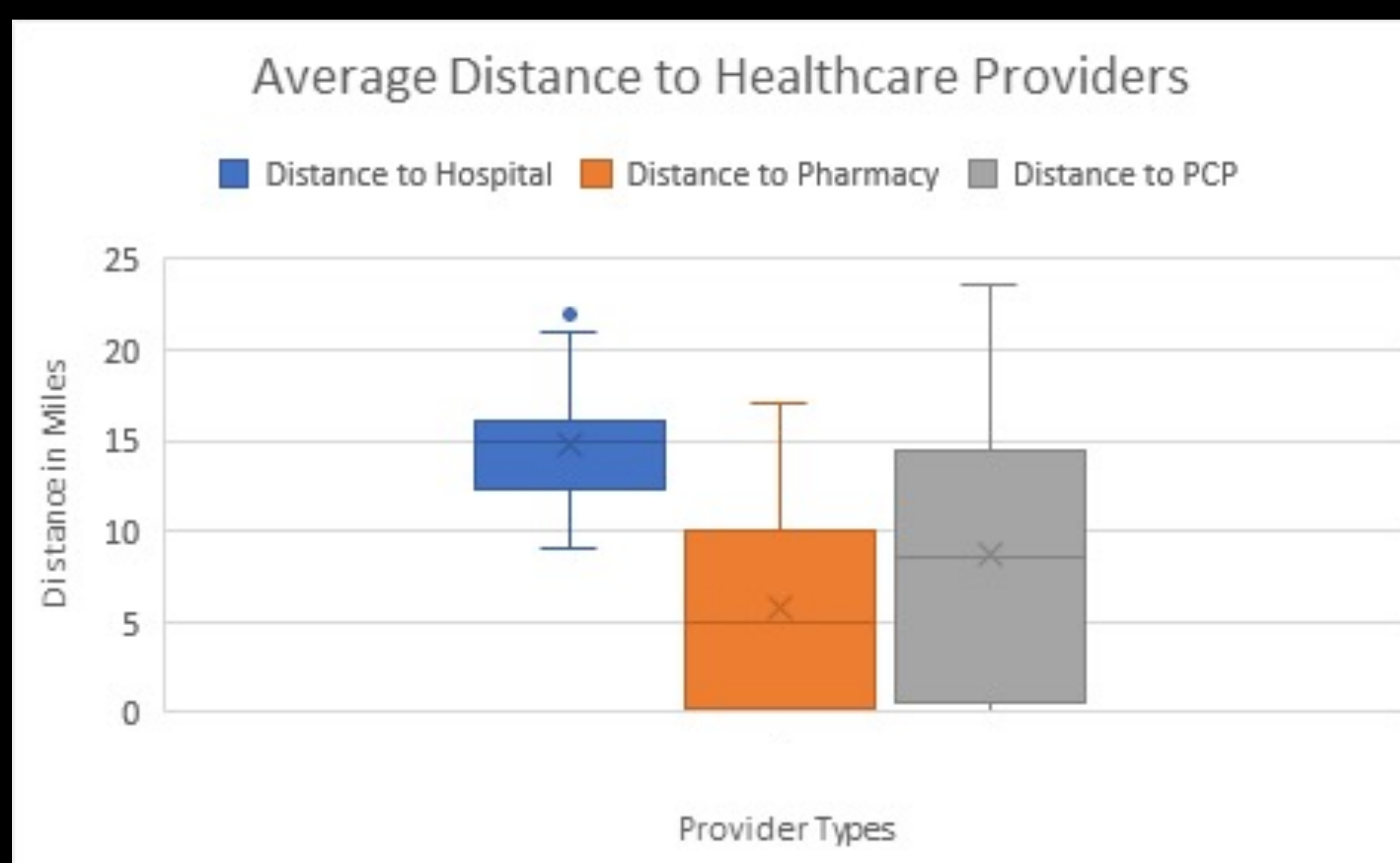
Due to the broad spectrum of our study question, we narrowed our target population to focus on women in rural communities in Lubbock County.

Data Collection Methods

We quantified access to women's health care using 3 specific markers: pap smears, IUD placement, and prenatal care. We identified primary care offices closest to each town in Lubbock County (excluding Lubbock) and contacted a representative from each office regarding the services they were able to provide. Furthermore, we investigated the distance patients have to travel to reach a pharmacy for oral contraceptives or a hospital for birth or other gynecologic procedures.

Findings

- Only one PCP open outside of normal business hours
- Conflicting online information for some PCPs (Multiple phone numbers, addresses, and hours)
- Hold times for upwards of 10 minutes
- Lack of websites or confusing websites
- Some doctors listed on google are no longer practicing



Conclusions

Given our gathered data, it becomes apparent that rural communities in Lubbock County are extremely dependent on the Lubbock hospital system for women's care. Access to information on rural care is difficult to navigate, and the availability of our 3 markers was variable amongst rural primary care providers. Despite the quality of care in Lubbock proper, this is often too difficult for most to regularly access. We therefore propose the following ideas to increase access to women's care and make the shift towards preventative care:

Future Directions

1. Use existing local health infrastructure such as pharmacies to encourage annual well woman exams.
2. Educate rural communities on the availability of women's health charities, such as Jane's Due Process
3. Create a list of available women's health resources and distribute them locally.

With these in place, we hope to encourage more women from rural Lubbock County to seek out preventative annual care and family planning resources.