



How Can Bridger Care Clinic Increase the Use and Awareness of LARCs (Long Acting Reversible Contraceptives)?

Samantha Starr



Montana IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE)

INTRODUCTION

LARCs (Long Acting Reversible Contraceptives) include methods such as IUDs, implants, and birth control shots. These methods of birth control are the most effective form of birth control available and also offer the convenience of being reversible. They are more expensive short term, but for their duration most LARCs end up being more cost effective than more commonly used methods such as birth control pills and condoms, even without insurance as an added factor in reducing their cost.

My goal was to find ways for Bridger Care Clinic to increase the use and awareness of LARCs. We first started by looking at the barriers that people most commonly cite as their reasons for not utilizing LARCs: cost, fears/misconceptions, and lack of awareness. By conducting an anonymous and voluntary survey that asked questions about these factors we hoped to better understand what peoples' relationship with LARCs is and use that information to offer the best reproductive health care possible.

METHODS

I worked with Ms. Stephanie McDowell, Associate of Bridger Care Clinic, started by looking at the barriers people face when considering LARCs and figured out which questions would yield the most pertinent results with the help of Montana State University's Statistical Consulting Center. We thought it would help incentivize people to fill out a survey if they would be offered the chance to win a \$50.00 Amazon gift card, so that bit was added to a separate page where people could choose to leave their email and be entered into a drawing to win the gift card.

In an attempt to survey a population of people that represents Bozeman accurately, we started by putting the surveys at the Bozeman Public Library. The voluntary survey was not filled out by enough people to conclude statistically significant results, and due to the short window of time available for this research internship, Mr. William Stadwiser and I decided that it would make more sense to focus on research methods, preliminary work, and re-branding my project as a fact-finding and prep-work initiative rather than an implementable project.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

In an article published in *Contraception*, Volume 89, Issue 2, February 2014, called "Accessibility of long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)" the authors sought to examine the on-site availability of LARCs as well as unveil the barriers to providing LARCs.

At Bridger Care Clinic, the perceived barriers keeping people from utilizing LARCs were cost, lack of awareness, and fears/misconceptions. From a sample of 423 FQHCs out of 1128 total in 2011, "The most commonly reported barriers to providing on-site access to LARC methods are related to the cost of stocking or supplying the drug and/or device, the perceived lack of staffing and training, and the unique needs of special populations". While I looked at it from the perspective of the patient, the study looked to the clinics for answers and both yielded similar results.

Relating to cost, the article cites that "A recent study of over 9000 underserved women showed that, when cost barriers were removed, 75% of women chose a LARC method as their contraceptive method of choice". Additionally, the top qualitative responses about barriers included: "the cost of stocking IUD devices and implant supplies, poor reimbursement for IUD insertion, the cost burden for patients related to purchasing IUD or implant devices, the need for training staff for IUD and implant insertion, and specific challenges related to providing LARC methods to special populations such as adolescents and undocumented immigrants."



OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOLLOW UP RESEARCH

I chose to conduct the survey at the Bozeman Public Library with the intention of getting a representative sample of the population that Bridger Care Clinic could possibly serve. This idea may prove fruitful in the future but it would take a very long time for enough surveys to be completed to analyze any data.

An alternative idea could be to change the scope of the project and the sample population: instead of looking at potential Bridger Care Clinic clients, the survey could be held at Bridger Care Clinic and the population to be analyzed would be current clients. The questions could change to "How can Bridger Care Clinic increase the use and awareness of LARCs among its patients?"

This model could be applied to any population the upcoming intern would want to study. For example, the survey could be administered in an MSU classroom and the population in question could be MSU students and how to increase their use and awareness of LARCs.

After the surveys have been administered and collected, the data could then be statistically analyzed to look for relationships between income, awareness, availability, and LARC usage.

ISSUES REGARDING HEALTHCARE COVERAGE

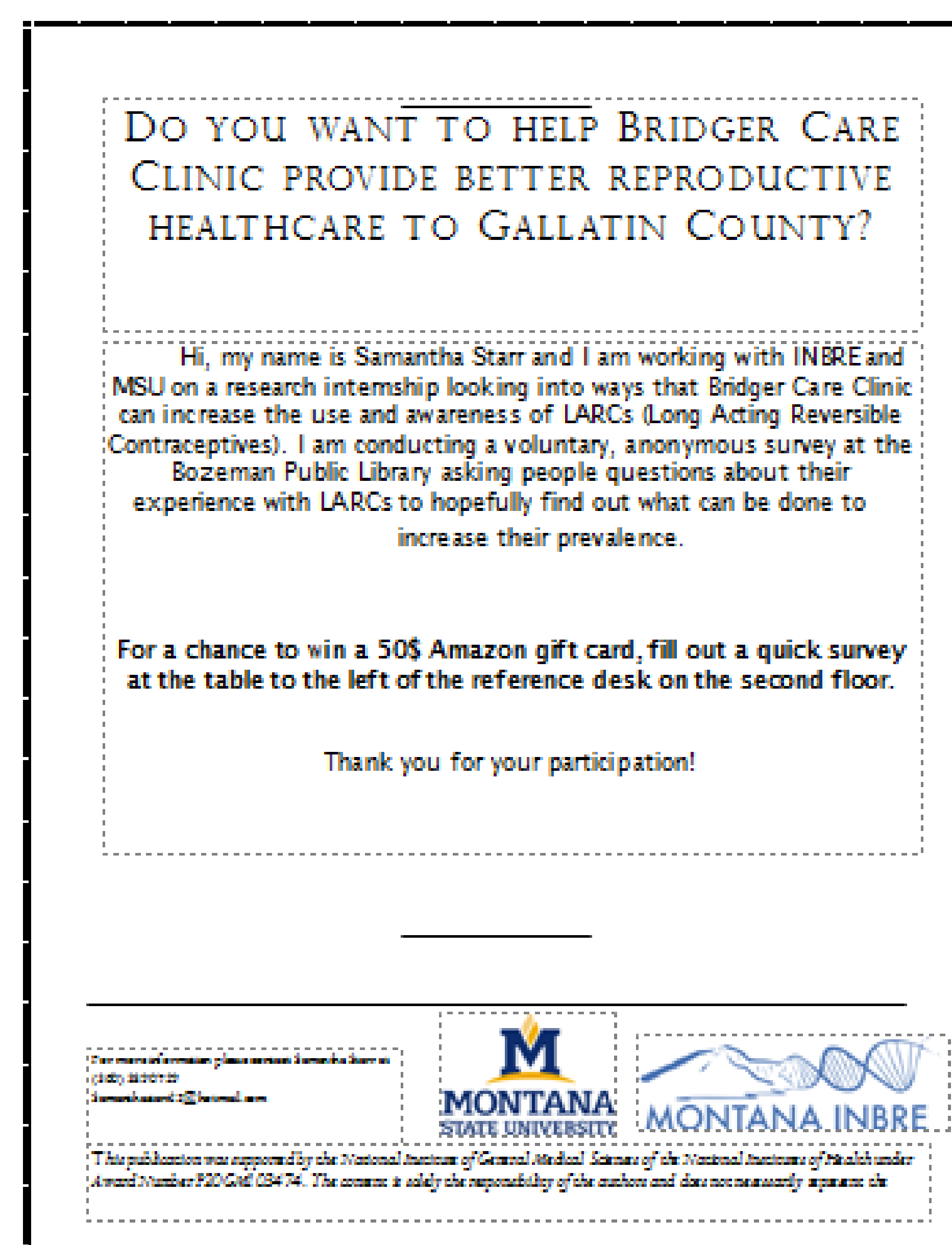
According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Codebook Report, 2014, Landline and Cell-Phone Data conducted by the CDC and the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS):

- 10.61% of people surveyed answered "Yes" to the question "Was there a time in the past 12 months when you needed to see a doctor but could not because of cost?"
- 43.38% of respondents age 18-64 responded "No" or "Don't know/Not sure, Refused or Missing" when asked if they had any form of health care coverage.

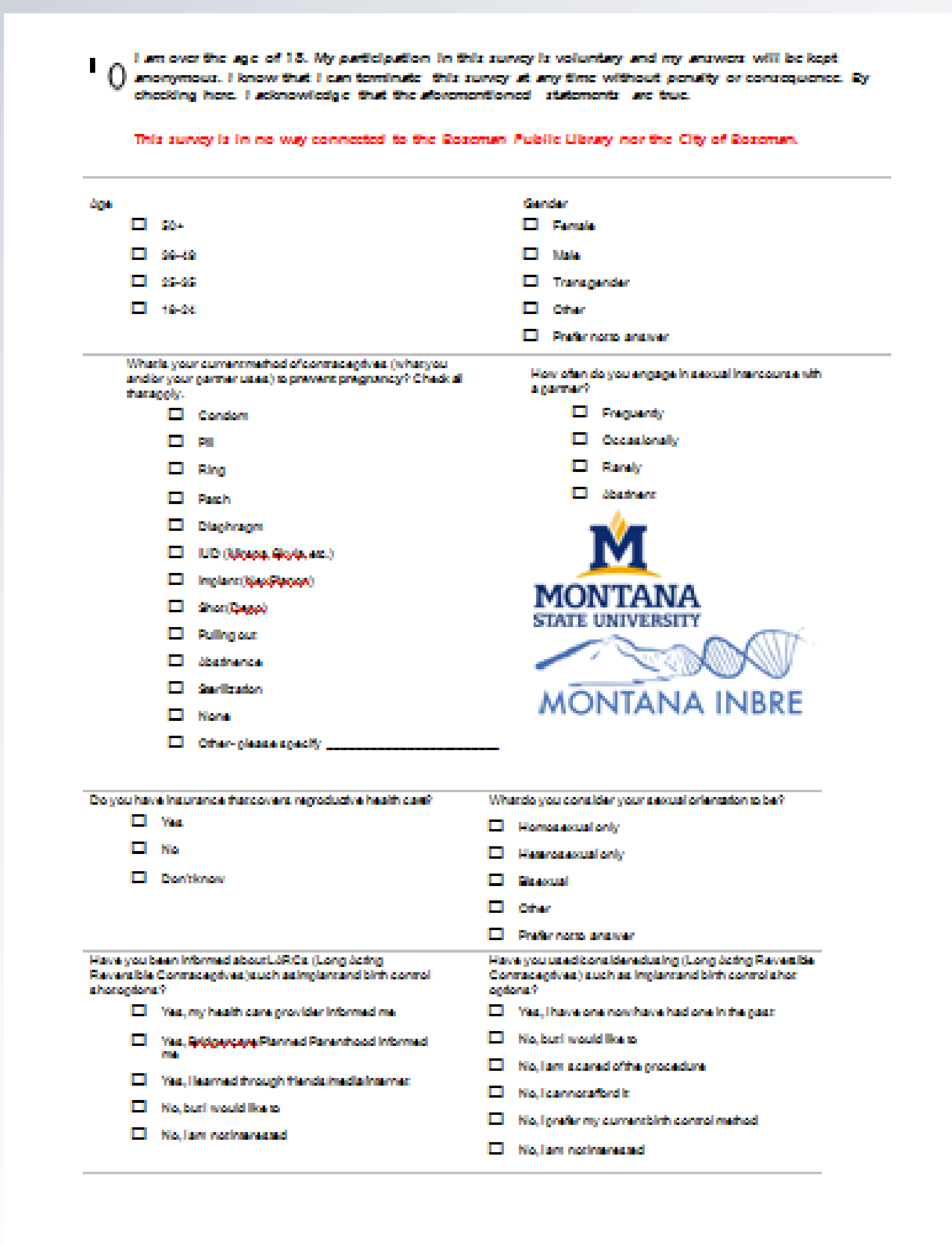
These statistics highlight one of the main barriers people face when considering LARCs- cost. Without health insurance, LARCs can carry a hefty price tag that people often cannot pay, even while acknowledging the long term cost effectiveness. This offers insight for Bridger Care as they are able to help people find a health care provider that works for them.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Research reported in this publication was supported by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number P20GM103474. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.



The flier posted at the Bozeman Public Library.



The front page of the survey.