



**BlueCross BlueShield
of Oklahoma**



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Media Contacts: Melissa Clark, BCBSOK, 918-619-5190
Jennifer Dennis-Smith, OSMA, 405-412-2540

**Private and Public Organizations Partner to Increase Patients' Access
to Quality Health Care in Medically Underserved Panhandle:
*Ivette Cuadrado, M.D., to Provide Vital Bilingual Health Care Services in Texas County***

(GUYMON, Okla.) – The Physician Manpower Training Commission (PMTTC), in partnership with the Oklahoma State Medical Association (OSMA), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma (BCBSOK), Texas County and Memorial Hospital of Texas County (MHTC), is proud to announce that a new general practitioner physician, Ivette Cuadrado, M.D., will join the team at MHTC beginning Jan. 1, 2019.

"Texas County is federally designated as a 'health-professional-shortage area' due to an insufficient number of physicians, the remote location and diverse population," said Jana Castleberry, manager of the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health Development for the Oklahoma State Department of Health, which assesses the ability of the health care workforce in Oklahoma to meet the state's diverse health care needs. "The hiring of Dr. Cuadrado fills a critical health care need by removing geographic and linguistic barriers to care. By being able to provide culturally appropriate, affordable health care, Dr. Cuadrado will most certainly make a positive impact on the health and well-being of the citizens of Guymon and the surrounding areas."

Dr. Cuadrado, a Puerto Rican native, recently completed her advanced fellowship training in Los Angeles, Calif. As a bilingual doctor who speaks both English and Spanish, her presence in Guymon will help to serve the state's fourth largest Hispanic population. She is licensed in the State of Oklahoma and is completing her credentialing process. She is licensed for General Practice and a specialty in Nuclear Medicine.

"I am very excited about practicing medicine in a place as diverse as Guymon," said Dr. Cuadrado. "I am looking forward to being part of the community."

Dr. Cuadrado's relocation to Oklahoma is the result of a coordinated effort to increase quality health care for all Oklahomans through a unique financial incentive, facilitated by the PMTC and funded by BCBSOK, OSMA and Texas County. The Oklahoma Medical Loan Repayment program grant of \$160,000 will help repay a portion of the physician's medical student loans. Grant payments will be spread out in installments over four years.

"This public/private sector sponsorship model could have a significant impact on statewide access to care, economic development, and rural hospital sustainability," said Richard D. Evans, executive director of Physician Manpower Training Commission (PMTTC), which seeks to place doctors in underserved communities across the state. "Loan repayment programs provide popular financial incentives to physicians and physician assistants in exchange for locating and practicing medicine in rural and underserved communities of Oklahoma. OSMA and BCBSOK approached PMTC without restrictions on utilization of the funding, other than the expressed desire to place a physician in a rural community, identified by PMTC, that would benefit from the placement. If other private organizations join their efforts, Oklahoma will gain ground on the rural health workforce crisis, and recognize improvements from both a health outcome, as well as an economic perspective."

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In addition to keeping a community healthy, Oklahoma physicians also provide essential economic activity. According to the American Medical Association, each Oklahoma physician supports an average of 11.7 jobs and contributes \$896,988 to workers' wages and benefits. This economic impact can produce a ripple effect as those employed by physicians support other local businesses as well.

"This program provides a great opportunity for rural communities to bring much-needed primary care physicians to underserved areas," said Andy Fosmire, vice president for Rural Health, Oklahoma Hospital Association. "Developing partnerships like these to increase access to care is truly a victory for the patients served in this region of the state, along with the PMTC, OSMA and BCBSOK."

"As Oklahoma's largest health insurer with more than 800,000 members statewide and nearly 8,000 in the Panhandle alone, we want to improve the health of all Oklahomans," said Ted Haynes, executive advisor and former president of BCBSOK. "Supporting the placement of a physician in an underserved area of rural Oklahoma, such as Guymon, is at the heart of our making sure people have access to quality health care. It aligns perfectly with our purpose to do everything in our power to stand by our members in sickness and in health."

"Throughout its long history, OSMA has worked to foster a healthier Oklahoma through medical advocacy and physician continuing education opportunities, but we're always looking for new ways to make a direct impact in our communities," said OSMA Executive Director Wes Glinsmann. "One of the greatest ways we can do this is to partner with BCBSOK, Texas County and the PMTC in their efforts to address the growing need for highly-trained doctors to work in critical access areas, such as Texas County. Rural physicians not only provide crucial services and keep their patients healthy, they also help breathe life into their communities, and we believe Dr. Cuadrado will make a great impact in western Oklahoma. On behalf of physicians throughout the state, we are thrilled to welcome her and look forward to helping her grow her career in Guymon."

"The opportunity to have BCBSOK and the OSMA join in with the PMTC and MHTC to help recruit a primary care physician to Guymon, Okla., is beyond measurable," said Doug Swim, CEO SRP Guymon, LLC. "The entire community of patients and businesses will be positively impacted for years to come."

About the Oklahoma State Medical Association

From medical school to retirement, physicians rely on the Oklahoma State Medical Association to champion healthcare and safety for Oklahomans and support doctors in advancing the compassionate practice of medicine through legislative and regulatory advocacy, professional development, practice resources and other benefits spanning all medical practice structures and specialties. To learn more, visit OKMed.org.

About the Physician Manpower Training Commission

PMTC is an Oklahoma State Agency created in 1975 with statutory authority and a 43-year history of administering financial assistance scholarship and incentive programs to recruit and retain primary care health professionals to underserved rural Oklahoma communities, and assisting State university programs in training physicians.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma

For more than 78 years, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma has been committed to meeting the health care financing needs of Oklahomans. As the state's oldest and largest private health insurer, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma provides health care benefit plans for more than 800,000 Oklahomans. For more information, visit bcbsok.com. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma is a Division of Health Care Service Corporation (which operates Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans in Texas, Illinois, Oklahoma, Montana and New Mexico), the country's largest customer-owned health insurer and fourth largest health insurer overall. Health Care Service Corporation is a Mutual Legal Reserve Company and an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

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