Speaker 1:

On the next episode of Big Ideas TXST, Dr. Melinda Villagran, Director of the Translational Health Research Initiative discusses the fascinating results of her research study on the impact of daily work commuting in the Austin area, a study that includes the unexpected impacts of COVID-19.

Dr. Melinda Villagran:

COVID-19 came along. Obviously there was this massive shift that happened overnight. We thought it would be worthwhile to go back to the same population of people and to do a new study, but just add this extra layer to say for people who have not previously been experienced at telework, what's going on? And specifically, in my case, I'm interested in the relationship between commuting in health, because I mean, we might not think of commuting. When you think of things that are bad for your health, you think of smoking, a lack of exercise, unexposure, diet, all those things. But we don't think, "Gosh, commuting takes a toll on my health," but it does.

Dr. Melinda Villagran:

And in fact, research says that the longer your commute is every day, significantly worse your health will be. And as we see, I-35, there used to be a break between San Antonio and Austin. And now it's one kind of long continuous city. Why? Well, people are traveling further and further to get to their jobs. And we are making these choices without really understanding the implications of commuting on our health. And so it made good sense to us to say, when we have this whole group of people who are now shifting from driving to work each day, or taking mass transit, or however they get to work to working from home, looking at how their perceived health and their work productivity changed as a result of that shift.

Speaker 1:

To hear Dr. Villagran's full interview, listen to Big Ideas TXST episode seven, available now. Subscribe to experience more innovative thought-provoking content from Texas State University.