

## INTRODUCTION

- Specialized care is healthcare provided by a doctor who has completed advanced education and clinical training in a specific area of medicine.
- Access to specialized care is needed for better physical and mental health status and prevention, detection, and diagnosis of illness.
- Rural communities have difficulty accessing services in obstetrics, oncology, pediatric care, and many others specialties.
- Communities in rural areas struggle more often with barriers to healthcare including lack of transportation, distance, health insurance coverage, socioeconomic status, and poor health literacy (RHI, 2019).
- Strategies must be implemented in order to improve access and health outcome of patients in rural locations.

## IMPACTS ON PATIENT CARE

- Pediatrics:** Depending upon the subspecialty, an average of 2-53% percent of children are 80 miles or more away from the care specialty care they need (Turner et al., 2020).
- Oncology:** Cervical cancer patients living less than 5 miles from the nearest treatment facility were more likely to finish treatment within 56 days, compared to patients living 15 miles or greater (Spees et al., 2019)
- Obstetrics:** Women living in rural communities are up to 67% more likely to experience birth related complications and have higher likelihood of prematurity and longer hospital stay. (Nesbitt et al., 2011).

## SIGNIFICANCE & OUTCOMES

- Upon analyzing all the articles and data collected, there is a clear distinction between the quality and access to specialized care dependent upon demographics. Rural residents have poorer health than their urban counterparts (Douthit et al., 2015).
- The most significant challenges presented to rural living populations are resource limitations, confidentiality limitations, overlapping roles, provider travel, service access, and training constraints (Brems et al., 2006).



## BARRIERS TO CARE

**Health insurance coverage** - 43.4% of uninsured rural residents reported not having a usual source of care, which was less than the 52.6% of uninsured rural residents reporting not having a usual source of care. The brief reports that 26.5% of uninsured, rural residents delayed receiving healthcare in the past year due to cost (RHI, 2019).

**Transportation and distance** - Subspecialized care is a massive burden in terms of time, cost, and time away from the workplace. Not to mention the lack of reliable transportation is a barrier. Elders with chronic conditions are more likely to live in rural areas

**Poor health literacy** - Lower educational levels and higher incidence of poverty often impact residents ability to understand health care instruction from their provider. This barrier can result in individuals' reluctance to seek help due to frustration in the healthcare field (RHI, 2019).

**Socioeconomic Status** - Residents fear seeking out specialized care due to uneasy and privacy concerns. These concerns can come from personal relationships and other medical experiences (RHI, 2019).

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CANCER CARE IN RURAL AND SOUTHERN U.S.

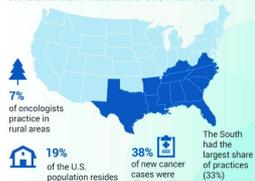


Figure 1: Oncology Practices and Cancer Rates in the United States Based on Geographic Location

Urban vs. Rural Medical Infrastructure

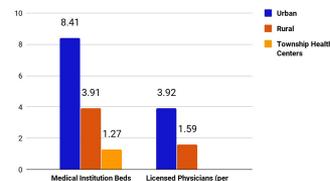


Figure 2: Rural vs. Urban Medical Infrastructure Compared

## OVERCOMING BARRIERS

- Due to cost, time, and discomfort of long traveling, rural areas have been provided resources to help (Baldwin et al., 2008)
- Resources include: Telemedicine, telecommunications, temporary housing near healthcare providers, private transportation (Spees et al., 2019)
- Rural areas need more concentrative outreach services, supportive care, and resources to receive proper care.
- Increasing affiliations with larger healthcare networks and improving workforce shortages can begin to increase access to rural areas (RHI, 2019).