

By Rachael Szilagyi, Jenna Carley, Grace Glemboski, and Chase Robinson

Introduction

Rural communities are unable to gain access to affordable health care and are in need of acquiring a means to receive health care and education. Those in rural communities often sacrifice health care due to its cost so they can afford the other needs in their lives. Our research looks at inaccessibility to cardiovascular care in rural areas and how the healthcare system contributes to this issue (Loyola & Palileo -Villanueva, 2020)

Effect on Everyday Lives

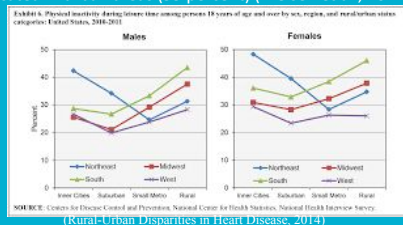
- Those in lower income quartile had a higher readmission rate for cardiovascular causes to hospitals compared to those in higher income quartiles (Petile et al., 2019)
- Out-of-pocket expenses is costly and can limit resources resulting in neglecting health issues (Loyola & Palileo-Villanueva, 2020)

Issues With Recovery

- There is not usually quick and accessible healthcare in many rural areas that help in the management of cardiac ischemia and myocardial infarction (Thompson et al., 2019)
- Along with being from a rural area, these patients have trouble getting to and from the healthcare facilities. Underprivileged myocardial infarction patients living in a rural area will have a higher fatality rate than those with more accessible and affordable care (Thompson et al., 2019)
- If these patients are lucky enough and have the resources to survive their cardiac injury, their disadvantages can make recovery a large task.

Shortage of Healthcare Workers

- One of the larger issues contributing to the inaccessibility of care is a shortage of healthcare professionals.
- The federal government projects a shortage of over 20,000 primary care physicians in rural areas by 2025 (Nielsen et al., 2017).
- 99% of residencies are in urban or suburban areas (Nielsen et al., 2017).
- The majority of residency slots are currently found in the northeast United States (69 percent), are slotted for non-primary care (or specialist) training (86 percent), and are located in urban areas (99 percent) (Nielsen et al., 2017).



Health Care Avoidance

- Rural communities are further separated from care through their own avoidance of it. They are less likely to seek care than urban counterparts, even when they can afford it.
- A 2008 study of 6714 people found that rural residents were 1.7 times more likely to report avoidance than in metropolitan settings (Spleen et al., 2014).
- Additional barriers such as stigma, lack of privacy, lack of culturally appropriate interventions, and acceptance of poor health were documented in these rural communities (Spleen et al., 2014).

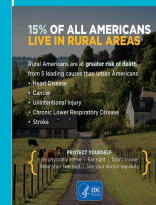
Discussion

When compared to urban areas, rural areas experience a lower quality of healthcare and have higher levels of mortality due to cardiovascular disease. For example, rural African Americans are often diagnosed earlier in life, but experience higher rates of morbidity and mortality. Cardiovascular health education and intervention is associated with advancements in the stages of change toward the action and maintenance phases of CVD (Abbott et al., 2018).

Conclusion

To improve care in rural areas, medical students should be encouraged to practice in rural settings and be provided training specific to rural areas. Increasing the number of students will increase the numbers of physicians and improve accessibility of care.

Physicians can improve their care for rural communities by: practicing cultural proficiency, setting priorities and realistic plans with patients, helping new patients understand and navigate healthcare, providing materials to support low income families, and advocating for low-income communities. By increasing the amount and quality of care, patient behavior and health can be changed positively.



Percentages of potentially preventable deaths in 2017:

21.7%

of cancer deaths in rural counties vs. 3.2% in urban counties

44.9%

of heart disease deaths in rural counties vs. 18.5% in large fringe metropolitan areas

57.1%

of chronic lower respiratory disease deaths in rural counties vs. 13% in urban counties

Healio