Rural Health Challenges and Opportunities
Occupational Therapy 511
April 24, 2012

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Center for Rural Health
UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences

Connecting resources and knowledge to strengthen the health of people in rural communities.

Center for Rural Health

- Established in 1980, at The University of North Dakota (UND) School of Medicine and Health Sciences in Grand Forks, ND
- One of the country’s most experienced state rural health offices
- UND Center of Excellence in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity
- Focus on:
  - Education, Training, and Resource Awareness
  - Community Development and Technical Assistance
  - Native American Health
  - Rural Health Workforce
  - Rural Health Research
  - Rural Health Policy
  - Program Evaluation
- Web site: ruralhealth.und.edu
Primary Questions

• What is rural health?

• Why is community important to rural health?

• What are some of the important rural health issues?

• How do you see local health care?

A Guiding Principle for Rural Health

“Vision is the art of seeing things invisible”

Jonathan Swift
What is Rural Health?

• Rural health focuses on population health and improving health status
  • Quality of care, access to care, cost of care – “drivers”

• Rural health relies on infrastructure: facilities, providers, services, and programs available to the public (all with quality, access, and cost implications)
  • Some are for-profit and some private or public non-profit entities
  • More and more health networks – independence with collaboration
  • Examples include: Community hospitals, clinics, public health, EMS, nursing homes/aging services, home health, mental health, dental, pharmacy, and others

• Rural health is not urban health in a rural or frontier area
What is Rural Health?

- **Philosophy**: rural people have the same right to expect healthy lives and access to care as do urban people – fairness frame
  - Access essential services locally or regionally
  - Access to specialty services through network arrangements
  - Quality of care on par with urban
  - Availability of technology

- **Rural health is very community oriented** – interdependence frame
  - Integral part of what a community is and how people see themselves
  - Sectors: Economic/business, public/government, education, faith/church, and health/human services
  - Direct services provided to the public and secondary impact for other sectors
  - Major employer

So Why Is Community Important to Rural Health?

- **Rural culture** – more interdependence, connectedness, cohesiveness, collaborative, and people identify with institutions and each other

- **Relationships** – things get done because of people, and sometimes don’t get done because of people – are the right people at the table?

- **Rural health contributes to the community** – provision of health services (access), improvement of health, economic contributions, community development, health facilities are a sense of community identity

- **Communities contribute to the rural health system** – employees, purchase of health services, financing, fund raising, volunteers, ideas and vision
### Comparative Rural and Urban Strengths and Weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong informal support network</td>
<td>More stable economy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>Availability of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesive</td>
<td>Availability of professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Established interdependence</td>
<td>Growing and diverse population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Change is natural</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Weaknesses:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Skewed population demographics</td>
<td>Lack of cohesiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fluctuating economy</td>
<td>Limited informal support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
<td>Competition among providers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shortage of professionals</td>
<td>Competition for fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td>More contentious-fractions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Implications of strengths and weaknesses on rural health systems
Community Development Model

Environmental Impacts
- Demographics
- Economic Conditions
- Political Process
- Workforce
- Finance
- Technology
- Health Organizations
- Culture and Attitude

Community or Health Organization
- Take Action
- No Action
- Delay Action

Action
- Assessment and Planning
- Community Forums
- Community Education
- Collaboration/Networking
- Regional Approach
- Community and Economic Development Integration
- Service Diversification
- Skill Development
- Advocacy

Source: Brad Gibbens, Associate Director
UND Center for Rural Health

What are Some Important Rural Health Issues?

- Access to and availability of care
- Financial concerns facing rural hospitals and health systems
- Health workforce
- Quality of Care
- Health Information Technology
- Networks – rural hospitals, urban hospitals, clinics, others
- Emergency Medical Services – EMS, ambulance, quick response units
- Community and Economic Development
- Health System Reform
Inspector Wellness & the Case of the Many Medical Careers
Health Care and Economic Sectors Contribute to Community Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Care Sector</th>
<th>Economic Development Sector</th>
<th>Health and Economic Convergence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Health Status</td>
<td>• Wealth and prosperity</td>
<td>• Global or macro level goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Services</td>
<td>• Product – goods and services</td>
<td>• Acquisition and management of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employment</td>
<td>• Employment</td>
<td>• Employment – primary and secondary jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Finance</td>
<td>• Capital, investment, income</td>
<td>• Finance – inflow and outflow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resources</td>
<td>• Resources</td>
<td>• Economic impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Element in the local economy</td>
<td>• Grow and maintain local economy</td>
<td>• Overall community building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(Source: Brad Gibbens, Center for Rural Health, 2009)

Langdon Activity Center
Contact us for more information!

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