Rural Health Challenges and Opportunities

Occupational Therapy 511
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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
- UND Founder’s Day Departmental Award for Research
- 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

### Strengths:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>
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<tr>
<td>Cohesive</td>
<td>Availability of professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Established interdependence</td>
<td>Growing and diverse population</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Change is natural</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Weaknesses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skewed population demographics</td>
<td>Lack of cohesiveness</td>
</tr>
<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
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
Grant Supported Networks

- Board Training
- Health Information Technology
- Quality Improvement
- CAH Specialist
- Anesthesia Services
- Diabetes Care
- Wellness Services
- Emergency Preparedness
- Hypertension Project
- Health Occupations

Locations of North Dakota Ambulance Service Providers

Sources: North Dakota Department of Health
Ambulance Dispatch Planning (2012) Data dated
July 12, 2012, geographic files adapted from the
North Dakota Department of Transportation GIS
Base Map Data version 4.0.

Center for Rural Health
University of North Dakota
School of Medicine and Health Sciences
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></td>
<td>• Overall community building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Brad Gibbens, Center for Rural Health, 2009)

Langdon Activity Center