Rural-centric Residencies to Prepare Physicians for Rural Practice

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RTT Collaborative Annual Meeting
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Acknowledgment & Disclaimer

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Rural physician supply

Rural population: 17% of U.S. total
Rural physicians: 11% of all physicians
Past research tells us...

...residency location predicts rural practice.

- Exposure to rural training/rural content associated with rural practice.
Past research tells us...

...residency location predicts rural practice.
  ◦ Exposure to rural training/rural content associated with rural practice.

...osteopathic (DO) physicians more likely than allopathic (MD) to choose rural practice.
Most rural practice studies are about family medicine.
Study background

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MD and DO residencies will be under a unified accreditation system by 2020.

• Concern about ability of osteopathic programs to meet standards.
Research questions

What does the rural recruitment pipeline via residency training look like for other specialties (anesthesiology, emergency medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics/gynecology, pediatrics, psychiatry, general surgery)?
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What does the rural recruitment pipeline via residency training look like for other specialties (anesthesiology, emergency medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics/gynecology, pediatrics, psychiatry, general surgery)?

• How many residency programs seek to produce rural physicians?
• Where located?
• How much rural content?
• How much rurally located training?
Sampling frame

Of 1,849 residencies in these specialties, programs that were either:

- in a rural location (according to common standard definitions)
- or urban with a “rural track” (self-reported)
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We surveyed residencies meeting one of the above criteria in 2015 (82% response rate).

“Rural-centric” residencies: those reporting requiring 8+ weeks’ rural training.

- block rotations, continuity clinic, full time training
70% of responding programs reported that training rural physicians was part of their mission.
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58% of responding programs actively recruited applicants interested in rural practice.
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58% of responding programs actively recruited applicants interested in rural practice.

✓ 37% required at least 8 weeks’ rural training ("rural-centric").
Very little rural training available in rurally-relevant specialties

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ACGME: Accreditation Council for Graduation Medical Education
AOA: American Osteopathic Association
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Rural-specific training in ABMS/ACGME* core competencies

- Patient Care and Procedural Skills: 54.5%
- Systems-based Practice: 54.5%
- Medical Knowledge: 45.5%
- Interpersonal and Communication Skills: 40.9%
- Professionalism: 40.9%
- Practice-based Learning and Improvement: 31.8%

*American Board of Medical Specialties/Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education
Hospital located in a rural area*

*Hospital for the majority of inpatient rotations, according Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes, ZIP approximation (v. 3.1).
Mean time in rural* locations

Required rural block rotations:
- Urban programs: 11 weeks
- Rural programs: 49 weeks

Required rural continuity clinic sessions**: 
- 28 hours/week (PGY1-4)

*According to self report
**Internal medicine, obstetrics/gynecology, pediatrics, and psychiatry only
Programs reporting rural training locations*

- Block rotations (n=29)
- Clinic sessions (n=13)
- Rural full time training (n=16)

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*ZIP codes of reported training locations geocoded with RUCAs, v. 3.1.
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- All self-reported "rural" ZIPs in RUCA-defined rural areas
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- All self-reported "rural" ZIPs in RUCA-defined urban areas

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Graduates in rural practice

Programs identified graduates from 2007-2012. Graduates were matched to the AMA Physician Masterfile and we coded practice ZIPs as rural or urban using the RUCA v. 3.1 ZIP approximation. National numbers are from Chen et al., 2010 (Academic Medicine).
Conclusions and implications

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Little physician education in rural places, especially anesthesiology, ob/gyn, peds.
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How successful are different models of “rural” training for attracting and retaining future rural physicians?
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Will osteopathic residencies survive under unified accreditation?
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