Where Will Your Next Resident Come From? Rural Targeted Admissions Strategies at U.S. Medical Schools

Collaborative for Rural Primary care Research, Education, and Practice

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Why do medical school admissions matter for residency recruitment?
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Past Efforts

1970s – increase class sizes and new schools with primary care missions

2006 – AAMC calls for increase enrollment
• 30% increase in enrollment since 2002

New osteopathic schools
• 162% increase in osteopathic slots
Where will the next rural doctors come from?
Rural Targeted Admissions to Address the Physician Workforce Gap

Methods
• Surveyed Deans of Admissions at US medical schools
• Does your school have rural targeted admissions?
• Characteristics of applicants
• Does admissions process differ?
• Recruitment strategies
• Selected interviews with admissions personnel
Results

- Overall response rate 72% (133/186 schools)
  - 73% allopathic (106), 69% osteopathic (27)
- 69% of responding schools reported rural targeted admissions
Recruitment Activities by Educational Level

- **Career Exploration, Career Counseling, and/or Mentorship**
  - High schools: 83.3%
  - Community & technical colleges: 62.1%
  - Four-year universities: 68.2%
  - Post-baccalaureate programs: 28.2%

- **Academic Enhancement**
  - High schools: 47.7%
  - Community & technical colleges: 45.5%
  - Four-year universities: 22.4%
  - Post-baccalaureate programs: 28.2%

- **Admissions Preparation**
  - High schools: 57.5%
  - Community & technical colleges: 46.6%
  - Four-year universities: 35.7%
  - Post-baccalaureate programs: NA

- **Articulation Agreement**
  - High schools: 42.9%
  - Community & technical colleges: 20.5%
  - Four-year universities: 7.2%
  - Post-baccalaureate programs: 20.5%

*The data for admissions preparation and articulation agreement is not available for all educational levels.*
Characteristics Used to Identify Applicants Likely to Practice Rural (n = 92)

- Grew up in a rural community: 97.8%
- Provided volunteer service in a rural community: 80.9%
- Member of group underrepresented in medicine: 79.3%
- Graduated from a rural high school: 76.7%
- Stated interest in family medicine: 70.1%
- Previously employed in a rural community: 66.7%
- Positive rural exposure: 52.9%
- Non-continuous path from high school: 43.0%
- Graduated or expected graduation from public college or university: 32.1%
- Applicant's partner/spouse is receptive to rural living: 13.7%
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Admissions Process Strategies to Target Applicants Likely to Practice in Rural Areas (n = 92)

- Secondary application contains questions to help identify target applicants: 74.7%
- Preferential scoring in interview screening: 38.2%
- Preferential scoring in final admissions determination: 30.0%
- Modify MCAT cutoffs: 21.4%
- Modify GPA cutoffs: 18.8%
- Separate interviews than other applicants: 11.2%
- Different interview questions: 6.8%
Institutional Strategies to Target Applicants Likely to Practice Rural (n = 92)

- 75.6% Rural physicians part of interview team
- 72.0% Rural physicians involved in targeted strategy
- 37.1% Offer Targeted Financial Aid
- 20.2% Reserve slots in each entering class
Semi-structured Interviews

• 10 schools interviewed
  6 allopathic, 4 osteopathic
  6 public, 4 private
  Geographically diverse
• Schools varied widely in targeted admissions policies
Semi-structured Interviews

Application Process

• 4 schools with no outreach or different interview process
  2 of the 4 were entirely rural so had a single process for everyone
• 2 used rural as one attribute of many in a holistic process
• 4 had different process for rural applicants (secondary app, interview, etc.)
Semi-structured Interviews

Recruitment Activities
- Nearly all conducted some type of recruitment activity
- Importance of relationships with local and regional colleges
Semi-structured Interviews

Institutional Support
• Importance of administrative support from high levels of institution
• Financial and personnel resources
• Alumni resources
Rural Targeted Admissions to Address the Physician Workforce Gap

Key Points
• Vast majority reported targeted admissions
• Characteristics are evidence based
• Varying level of commitment
  Common to use AMCAS basics
  Less common to devote capital/resources
• Few altered admissions process
• Fewer reserved slots for rural
Rural Targeted Admissions to Address the Physician Workforce Gap

Key Points
- Vast majority engaged in career exploration
- Less common outreach to community colleges
- Admissions prep common with 4 year colleges
- 1/3 reported articulation agreements with 4 year colleges
Discussion
Contact

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