

Rural Family Medicine - a personal perspective

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Rural Family Practice

- Definitions of rural:



You know you're in a rural family practice residency if...



- 13. At least once a week a resident or medical student comes in late because they hit a deer on the way to work.

You know you're in a rural family practice residency if...



- 12. The resident with the biggest pickup gets to be chief.
- 11. Most of your OB patients have multiple tattoos.

You know you're in a rural family practice residency if...

- 10. Most of your staff have multiple tattoos.
- 9. You're starting to think your spouse would look good with several tattoos.
- 8. No one parks in the handicapped parking spots.

You know you're in a rural family practice residency if...

- 7. There's a man in the waiting room who's not wearing a ball cap from a farm supply company so you know he's a drug rep.
- 6. You can't find an attending to precept you because there's a monster truck pull in town that day.
- 5. You ask your patient if anyone in the family has AIDS and he shows you a picture of his uncle's new baler.

You know you're in a rural family practice residency if...

- 4. Someone keeps using up all the chewing tobacco in the call room and not replacing it.
- 3. Your patient with normal PFTs gets sob when he walks to his mailbox.
- 2. Your patients ask for quinolone samples to feed to their chickens.

You know you're in a rural family practice residency if...



- 1. You find yourself frequently using “shallow gene pool” as a diagnosis on your encounter forms.

Uniqueness of rural practice

- **Less well-defined groups of people in your community** (patients, neighbors, coworkers, etc.) - your patients are everywhere!
 - your kid's teachers, your grocer, your minister, etc.
 - can lead to a more rewarding (perhaps more complicated?) doctor/patient relationship

Uniqueness of rural practice

- **Your staff is like family** - be actively involved in hiring, firing, evaluations
 - your staff will reflect your practice style
 - make practice fun!



Uniqueness of rural practice



- **More opportunity (obligation!) to teach**
 - patients
 - office staff
 - administrators
 - hospital personnel
 - board members

Uniqueness of rural practice

- **More learning opportunities** because of more learning necessity!
 - less specialty assistance available, more patient resistance to referral
 - more likely to retain the skills you have learned if you use them
 - computer access has greatly enhanced availability of information

Myths about rural medicine

- **You make less money** - salaries may be very competitive
 - incentives available through NHSC, Ohio Physician Loan Repayment Program, etc.
 - overhead may be lower, less managed care, more moonlighting opportunities, lower cost of living - compensation other than \$\$\$

Myths about rural medicine

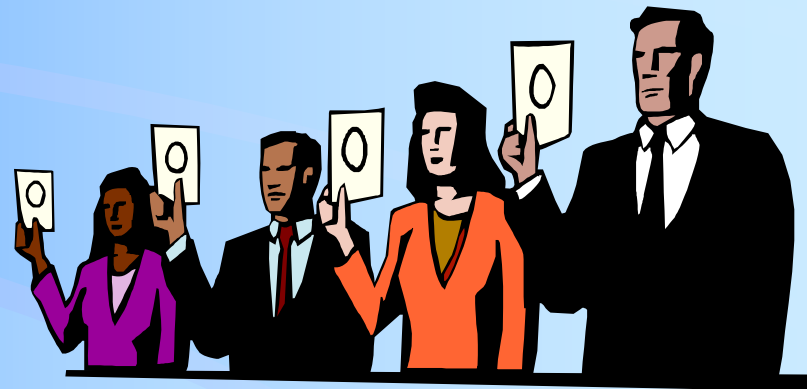
- **You have less time to yourself**
 - more opportunities to get involved in areas of interest because of the “small pond” effect - hospital administration and committees, team doctor, nursing home medical director, community projects, graduation speaker



Myths about rural medicine

- **Less prestige/glamour than other specialties**
 - media portrayal of modern medicine is skewed

- **SELF RESPECT**
is most important



Myths about rural medicine

- **Limitations in practice** - a “glorified nurse” - specialists are NOT primary care docs with additional training
- Expanded opportunities for participation in:
 - occupational health
 - office and hospital administration
 - community activities
 - board of health, coroner

Recruiting/placement



- If you know the location or type of community you want to practice in, use of in-house recruiters or non-profit placement services rather than recruiters might save \$20-25 thousand.

National Rural Health Association

- Kansas City, MO and Washington, D.C.
- n-f-p, individual and organizational members
- www.NRHA.org

National Rural Health Association

- A national membership organization whose mission is to improve the health of rural Americans and to provide leadership on rural issues through advocacy, communications, education and research

National Rural Health Association

- Advocacy
- publications
- Journal of Rural Health
- Resources
- research
- education

National Association of Rural Medical Educators

- A constituency group of the NRHA
- www.unmc.edu/Community/ruralmeded/
- also www.ruralfamilymedicine.org

ODH Primary Care and Rural Health Program

- Technical assistance (recruitment, development, etc.)
- research and data
- information (conferences, workshops, newsletter)
- Ohio Physician Loan Repayment Program

National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network

- N-f-p org made up of state n-f-p orgs
- www.3rnet.org

My eye-glazing career as a rural physician



- 1984 to present