Developing a Rural Healthcare Workforce: A Rural Scholars Program

Ohio Northern University

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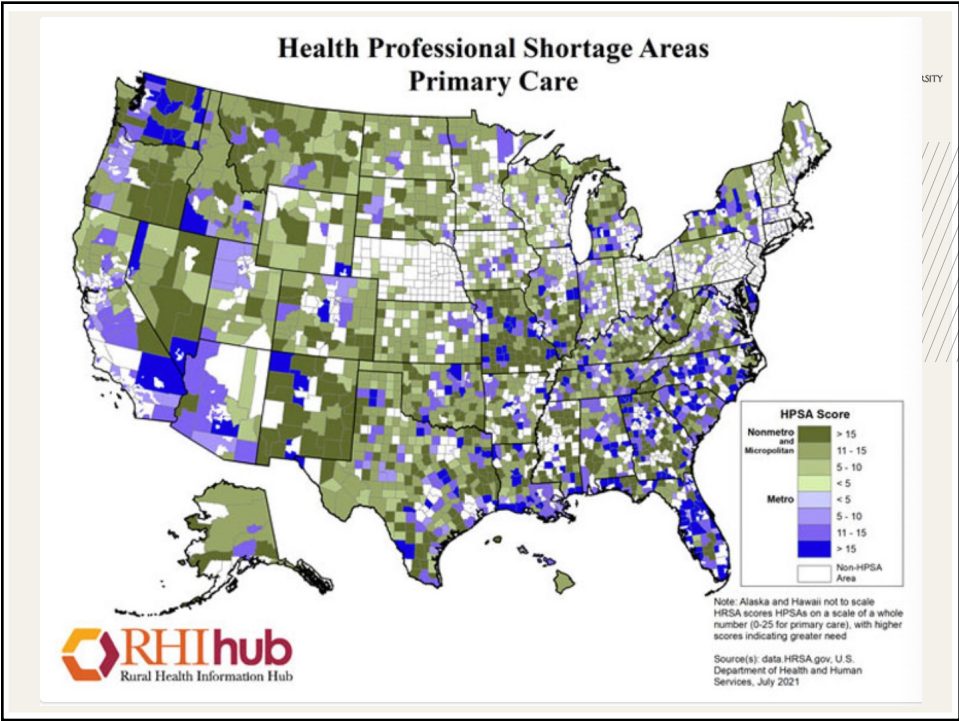Emily Eddy, PharmD, BCACP, BC-ADM

1

Objectives

- Explore rural workforce needs and currently available training programs for health professional students
- List the strengths and benefits of a rural health training program for health professional students, colleges, and the community
- Describe the steps taken to establish a rural health training program for health professional students
- Outline the components of a rural health training program
- List next steps in the implementation of a rural health training program
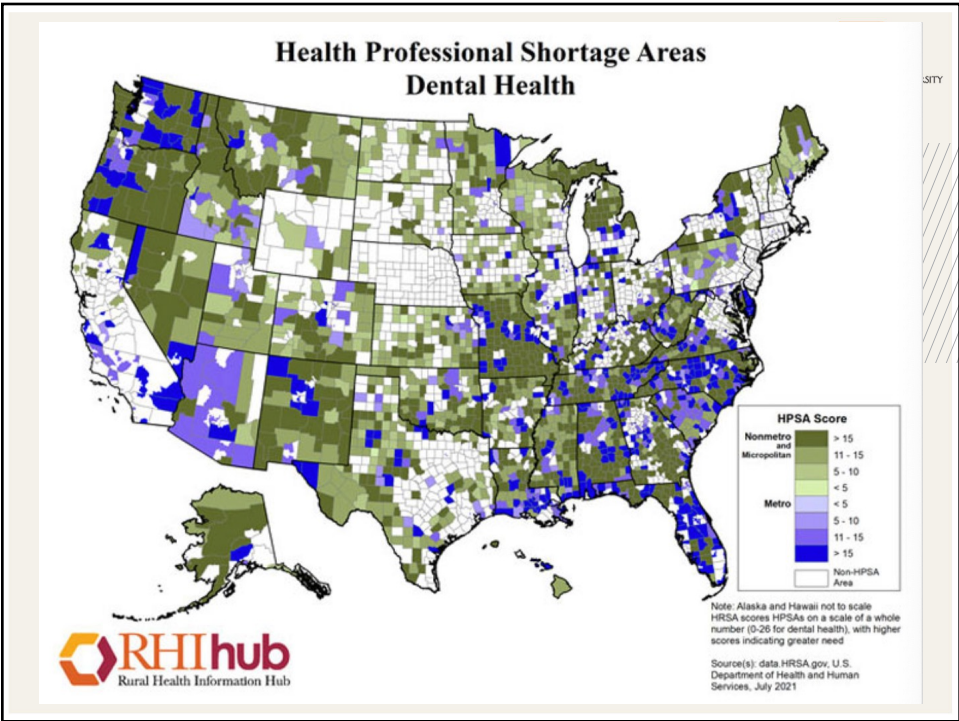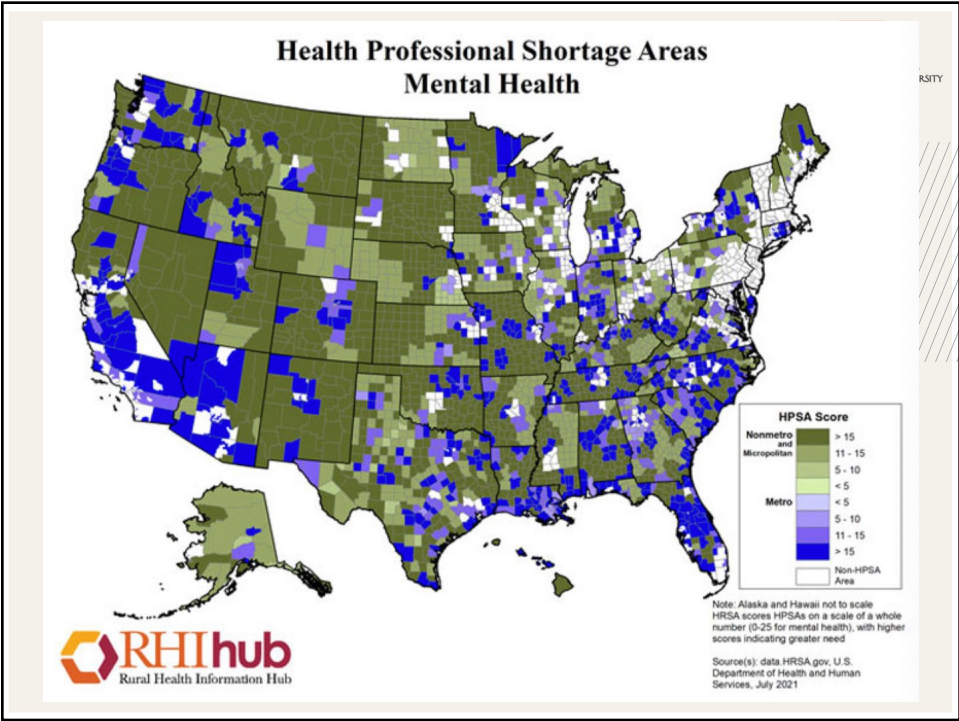
2

The Need for a Rural Healthcare Workforce

3

Health Professional Shortage Areas
Primary Care

4

Health Professional Shortage Areas
Dental Health

5

Health Professional Shortage Areas
Mental Health

6

Per Capita Rates of Health Professionals, 2008-2010 – Selected Occupations

Occupation	Health professionals per 10K, Rural	Health professionals per 10K, Urban
Dentists	2.9	4.3
Registered Nurses	65.3	93.6
Licensed Practical Nurses/Licensed Vocational Nurses	25.1	20.6
Physician Assistants	8.1	10.2
Physicians (MDs)	10.9	30.8
Physicians (DOs)	1.8	2.4
Primary Care Physicians	5.3	7.9
Total Physicians	12.7	33.3
Nurse Practitioners	6.5	8.1
Total Advanced Practice Registered Nurses	6.5	8.1
Nurse Anesthetists	1.2	1.6

Source: HRSA Area Health Resources Files, 2017 and 2018.

https://data.hrsa.gov/data/download

7

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO ADDRESS HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE ISSUES IN RURAL AREA?

8

What strategies can rural healthcare facilities help meet their workforce needs?

- Telehealth
- Interprofessional care teams
- Professionals working at the top of their license
- Plan for future workforce needs

RHIhub
Rural Health Information Hub

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9

What can schools do to meet rural healthcare workforce needs?

- Use admissions criteria that are likely to produce providers interested in rural practice, such as admitting more students from rural communities or who intend to practice in a rural community
- Offer rural-centric curricula and training tracks
- Develop distance education programs

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10

11

Benefits of a Rural Health Training Program

12

WHAT WOULD BE SOME POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF A RURAL HEALTHCARE TRAINING PROGRAM?

13

Developing a Rural Scholars Program

14

Background

- Ohio Northern University (ONU)
  - Rural, private college of pharmacy
  - Pharmacy is one of 5 colleges on campus
    - Nursing and medical laboratory science are other health care programs on campus
  - Six year, direct entry (0-6) pharmacy program
    - Required service learning and experiential experiences in the curriculum

15

Background

- ONU Healthwise
  - On-campus pharmacy
  - Mobile health unit
  - Patient services center
  - Drug and health information center
  - Service learning
  - Employee and student wellness
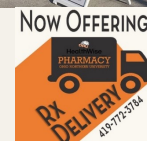
16

Pitching the Program

- Leverage
  - University's rural setting
  - Pre-existing clinical services
- Address
  - Local health care needs
- Create
  - Point of distinction for students and University
  - Enhanced skills and knowledge in preparation for rural/underserved practice

17

WHAT WOULD BE SOME POTENTIAL CHALLENGES IN REGARD TO IMPLEMENTATION OF A RURAL HEALTHCARE TRAINING PROGRAM?

18

Pitching the Program

- College of Pharmacy Executive Committee
- Credentialing challenges
- Part of a tiered approach to offer to other programs on campus and beyond campus

19

Mission and Goals

Mission and Goals
The Rural and Underserved Health Scholars Program (RUHSP) is a program at Ohio Northern University comprised of health professions and pre-health profession students passionate about providing care in the rural and underserved areas throughout the world. The scholars are a collective of students striving to gain the leadership skills and research experience necessary to successfully understand the unique needs of rural and underserved patient populations as well as provide the care that this unique population needs. Students will be provided mentorship, formal and informal teaching, service learning opportunities and patient care experiences. The Rural and Underserved Health Scholars will regularly attend meetings and functions, complete service learning, collaborate on community, clinical, and research-based projects and participate in all activities.

In completing the RUHSP program, students will develop skills and confidence in providing care in a rural setting. Often rural settings face a shortage of healthcare providers; the RUHSP program seeks to assist in filling this gap with competent, experienced professionals. In addition the RUSHP allow students to develop a unique skill set in the job market. By leveraging established community engagement and rural health initiatives, the RUHSP also serves as a point of distinction for ONU.

20

SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Rural location • Pre-existing rural services • Pre-existing outreach experiences • Breath of program experiences = unique • Defining feature of college • Provider status initiatives focused on underserved populations	• Interprofessional student pool • Lack of pre-existing seminar content • Lack of pre-existing project management course work
Opportunities	Threats
• Community agency partnerships • Rural health IPPE sites • Rural health outreach experiences • AHEC/OU scholars program (potential partners) • Student interest • Rural health needs • PCP shortage and need for primary care provider/gap for pharmacy services	• Faculty workload • Potential competition

21

Approval

• Recruitment
• Marketing
• Program development and implementation

RURAL HEALTH SCHOLARS PROGRAM
COLLEGE OF PHARMACY
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22

23

24

Rural and Underserved Health Scholars Program (RUHSP)

25

WHAT WOULD/SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A RURAL HEALTHCARE TRAINING PROGRAM?

26

Program Description

- Healthcare students apply for selection into the program
- Occurs over the last three years of the professional program
- 4x1 credit hour courses + patient care experiences + project implementation

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- **Seminars** – learn about various topics related to rural health, such rural health care and project development.

- **Patient experiences** – care for patients in rural settings and shadow health care providers who practice in rural settings.

- **Research experience** – design, implement and evaluate research related to rural and underserved patient populations, in collaboration with faculty members.

- **Leadership experience** – utilize our tools and guidance to solidify strong leadership skills necessary to enact change in rural and underserved communities.

- **Service opportunities** – develop and implement service-learning opportunities to address needs and opportunities in a rural, underserved community.

27

Courses/Seminars

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- Seminar #1
  - Explore rural health definitions and issues (access, chronic disease, etc.)
  - Introduce rural healthcare literature evaluation
  - Assigned project partner, community
    - Explore assigned community resources
    - Complete a community needs assessment

- Seminar #2
  - Based on community needs assessment, present an initial pitch on project to address community need
  - Complete a literature search, SWOT analysis, mission/vision and details on a project concept
  - Present a final pitch of project concept

28

Courses/Seminars

- Seminar #3
  - Research protocol development
  - Submit IRB protocol for project
  - Collaboration with local agencies
  - Promotion of project
  - Project logistics

- Seminar #4
  - Project implementation
  - Rural healthcare special topics
    - Regulation/legislative issues
    - Mental health
    - Elderly care

29

Leadership

- Leadership development plan each semester
- Year 1 focused on personal and public leadership using Covey's 7 Habits as an anchor
- Year 2 will focus on project leadership
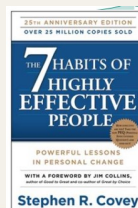
30

Patient Care Experiences

- Required patient care experience within the curriculum in rural settings
- During final year, will include a required number of clinical experiences in rural or underserved settings
- Reflection on experiences required each semester

31

Service

- COVID restriction anticipated community service
- Consideration of looking at professional service experience with rural health initiatives or organizations

32

Research/Community Project

- Data analysis and dissemination of project results during final year in the program
- Annual project presentations
- Optional presentations and publications
- Sustainability for post-program continuation

33

Current Status

- Inaugural cohort recruited in Spring 2020 → 8 students
- Recruitment for cohort #2 completed with another 8 scholars
- Expansion to nursing program planned for Fall 2021
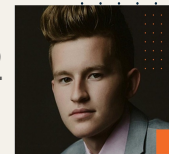
"This program will not only allow me to spread my boundaries as a pharmacy student to further expand my own education; but, also allow me to help others that are in need of care."

JOEY SIDOTI
OHIO NORTHERN UNIVERSITY

"I come from a developing country, I have seen challenges that rural communities face, so I understand the difficulties that they are going through."

HAN PHAM
OHIO NORTHERN UNIVERSITY

34

Next Steps

35

WHAT WOULD BE SOME NEXT STEPS REGARDING A RURAL HEALTHCARE TRAINING PROGRAM?

36

Next Steps

- Expansion both on- and off-campus
- Community projects reaching implementation phase in 2021-2022 academic year
- First cohort graduates in Spring 2023

37

Lessons Learned

- Assessment strategy under development

38

The Unknown

- Community Projects??

39

Resources

- https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/
- https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/project-examples/999
- https://www.onu.edu/college-pharmacy

40

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41