

Internet Connectivity Among Rural Alabama Veterans: Baseline Findings From the Alabama Veterans Rural Health Initiative (AVRHI) Project

There is little research on rural Veterans Internet usage to access health information. Studies have shown though that active duty military members will use the Internet to access health and self care information, and that they respond well to online tools focused on mental health and PTSD treatment. The current study focused on Internet usage among rural Alabama Veterans who were not enrolled or did not access VA services for 2 years. One goal was to review whether rural Veterans used the Internet to access health information. Data were gathered from 201 rural Alabama Veterans in 2009-2010 through outreach and direct mailings as part of the Alabama Veterans Rural Health Initiative (AVRHI). Fifty-three percent of the participants reported accessing the Internet, which is much lower than national rates. Of the participants who reported usage, 51.4% said they went online for health or medical information. Usage rates did not differ significantly by race. Of those that used the Internet there were not large differences by age group in the % of users who seek health information online. A little more than 28% of Internet users said they had looked online for Veterans information and benefits information. The authors concluded that the absence of racial/ethnic differences in usage rates suggests similar interventions can be used to encourage rural Veterans to access health care information and tools online regardless of ethnicity. Veterans have responded well to online self-care and treatment tools, and public health initiatives should encourage adoption of technology to increase access to health care information and care for rural Veterans. *Citation:* Allen, R.S., Guadagno, R.E., Parmalee, P., Minney, J.A., Hilgeman, M.M., Tabb, K.D., McNeil, S.F., Houston, T., Kertesz, S., & Davis, L. (2013). A secondary review of data from the Alabama Veterans Rural Health Initiative. *Rural and Remote Health* 12: 2138. (online) 2012. Available from <http://www.rrh.org.au>. ♦

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Did You Know?

- The Internet penetration rate for urban areas is 89% compared to 75% in rural areas.
- Forty-five percent of adults aged 70 to 75 use the Internet.
- Broadband access for adults between 25-64 doubled between 2005-2008.
- You can search, analyze and map broadband availability across the United States at the Web page "National Broadband Map: How connected is my community?" Visit broadbandmap.gov. ♦



Comparing the experiences of Rural and Urban Family Caregivers of the Terminally Ill

The quality of end-of-life care for rural residents is gaining greater attention, however little is known however about the caregiver experience in rural areas. This study compared urban and rural caregiving experiences focusing on caregivers' perceived health status, caregiving burden, and social supports. Four hundred seventy-nine potential study participants were recruited from communities in Ontario, Canada. One hundred forty individuals or 29% of participants provided data through completed phone surveys. There were no significant differences in reported caregiver strain between urban and rural caregivers, and they reported similar levels of social support. Both populations reported their health as good or really good. There were variations in the types of services used. Rural caregivers used more family physicians, emergency room visits, and pharmacy services whereas their urban counterparts had higher respite services usage. These difference may illustrate the need for more pain management services in rural areas. The results of this study demonstrated that there are consistencies in caregiving regardless of setting, but that key differences exist as well. These differences should be considered when developing caregiving programs. *Citation:* Brazil, K., Kaasalainen, S., Williams, A., Rodriguez, C. (2013). This telephone based survey compared caregiver perceptions in 3 key areas. *Rural and Remote Health* 13: 2250. (online) 2013. Available from <http://www.rrh.org.au>. ♦

