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Unhealthiest US Counties Have Fewest Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) per Capita

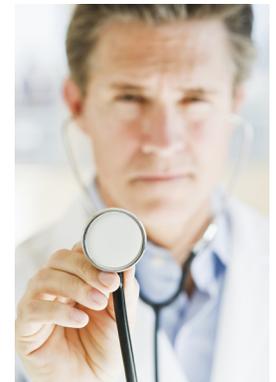
According to the 2013 County Health Rankings, a joint effort between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, counties that were considered least healthy had the fewest primary care physicians per capita while those counties considered the healthiest had the highest number of primary care physicians per capita. The healthfulness of a county was determined by how long and how well people live and how 25 different factors including access to health care, the number of preventable hospital stays, the rate of obesity, physical activity and the rate of smoking affect the rankings. Significant national findings include:

- The counties where people don't live as long and don't feel as well mentally or physically have the highest rate of smoking, teen births, and physical inactivity, as well as more preventable hospital stays.
- Residents living in healthier counties are 1.4 times more likely to have access to a doctor and dentist than those in the least healthy counties.
- People in the unhealthiest counties are dying too early at more than twice the rates of those in the healthiest counties.

The County Health Rankings are published online at www.countyhealthrankings.org. ♦

Did You Know?

- Not only is there a shortage of physicians, there is a maldistribution of physicians with fewer doctors practicing in rural areas and in inner cities. While some 20 percent of Americans live in rural areas, only 9 percent of physicians practice in rural areas.
- Sixty-seven percent of over 6,200 Health Professional Shortage Areas in the country are in non-urban areas. The ratio of primary care providers to patients in these areas is less than one per 2000.
- While there is a shortage of primary care physicians, the number of nurse practitioners (NPs) is expected to double in the next 20 years according to the Rand Corporation.
- NPs must have completed a masters or doctoral degree program and have advanced clinical training beyond their initial professional registered nurse preparation.
- Scope of practice for NPs vary from state to state. In some states, NP's are providing primary care without the oversight of a physician, in others physician oversight is required.
- The National Institute for Health Care Reform found in their analysis that the states requiring physician oversight prohibits NPs from working in rural areas where there is often a shortage of physicians available. ♦



Demand Will Far Outstrip Supply for Primary Care Physicians in Certain Areas After Full Implementation of Affordable Health Care Act (ACA)

A new analysis recently published in the online edition of Health Affairs found that 7 million Americans live in areas of the country where the demand for primary care may exceed the current supply by 10 percent once ACA is fully implemented and an additional 29 million Americans get health insurance coverage. This not only could affect access to care for the newly insured but also those that are currently insured. By estimating how many individuals are currently uninsured, the number of newly insured and expected primary care visit activity, and baseline supply of PCPs at the level of primary care service areas, these researchers found that the states with the highest expected need for primary care providers are the following: Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico, Florida, Arizona, Georgia, Arkansas, Oklahoma. Read the full article online:

<http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/early/2013/02/19/hlthaff.2012.0913>. ♦

