

#21 Rural Healthcare Essay

When people think of healthcare, they normally think of hospitals that are thriving and medical bills that are tedious but manageable. Though what they don't think about is Rural Healthcare, and how it isn't nearly as good as it should be. Rural Healthcare is healthcare that focuses on areas with mainly minorities. It is less managed and overlooked far too often. Those who live in rural areas tend to struggle more with it and are unable to get the proper care they need and deserve. There are multiple things that need to change with rural healthcare in order to improve it. Issues that ultimately affect how it works overall include patients not having enough access to healthcare, there not being enough workers to run healthcare units, and patients not having enough money or insurance to cover their medical expenses.

Most people who live in rural areas are unable to get healthcare; only a small portion of them can get some, if not any at all. Over time, more and more barriers are appearing that continue to block specifically those who live in rural areas. In an article called "Healthcare Access in Rural Communities" by *RHIhub*, barriers such as transportation and distance are mentioned. The article details how, in rural areas, the distance to proper services is large, not to mention how most likely they don't have any vehicles to travel that distance. Another barrier raised is the lack of quality health literacy among people. If patients can't understand what they are being told, then how are they supposed to do things to help their own health? It's not surprising that people have trouble accessing proper health care to fit their needs. Much needs to be done to help these people live better and thrive more daily. A start would be to target transportation, such as if the hospitals in rural areas had a bus system that could drive people to the hospital whenever needed. If done, it could help patients not worry as much about transportation and allow them to better focus on their health. Access to healthcare for those living in rural areas remains challenging and is likely to persist. But with more efforts towards some of these barriers, we can help those who don't have access to healthcare get the access that they need.

Another barrier to rural healthcare is the lack of healthcare workers who are able and willing to work in rural areas. People who work in healthcare in rural areas are commonly overlooked or mistreated. For example, it is mentioned in an article titled "Rural physician burnout and staffing shortage impact in 2025" by *NRHA* that many workers struggle with being able to work with harsh, demanding schedules, along with mental health issues, and not enough recognition for their efforts. Similarly to patients themselves, workers struggle with their own problems with rural healthcare systems and hospitals. Without happy and able workers, hospitals can't function; many workers have to take up second jobs to keep themselves afloat. Something that could be done for them would be helping maintain a more flexible and manageable schedule for the workers to help them not feel overwhelmed due to workloads. Another thing would be helping implement mental health support systems throughout the work environment and encouraging more teamwork-based communities. When aiming to improve rural healthcare, patients are not the only ones who need to be prioritized; the workers do too. Rural healthcare workers need just as much help as the patients do. With more focus on the workers, better care overall can be provided to patients, and possibly more workers may work if the conditions improve enough. The more that can be done for them means more hope for those in rural areas overall.

The third barrier that prevents better rural healthcare is patients not having enough money or insurance for healthcare. In an article titled "Rural Americans Struggle with Medical Bills and

Health Care Affordability" by Munira Z. Gunja, Gunja details issues that rural families face that affect their access to healthcare. One issue is that families are skipping essential care due to the costs. Not just families, but people in general are skipping needed care due to the costs being too much for them. Families who do get medical care, on the other hand, struggle more with being able to pay the medical bills and end up going into debt because of it. Healthcare debt is a problem that many people deal with on a daily basis. As the bills pile up, people tend to become more stressed and anxious about how they will be able to pay them. Those who live in rural areas face this on a deeper level than those in urban areas. One way to tackle this would be by making insurance easier for every family to have; the easier access they have to it, the better chance they have of survival. Many people struggle with debt and medical bills; the more that is done to help pay for them, the better. Once people are better able to receive insurance, more people will more likely go to hospitals and walk-ins to get help when they need it, instead of skipping it due to not being able to pay for it.

Overall access to healthcare, worker shortages, and money are some of the many barriers that patients face when dealing with rural healthcare. And still so much more needs to be done for those who live in rural areas. Even though not much can be done overnight, over time, with proper dedication, something can be done. What is most important is remembering to make rural areas a priority, too. The problems they face won't go away any time soon and will only continue as long as nothing is done to help those who need it.

Works Cited

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