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I live in a very small town called Newberry that is located in the Eastern Upper Peninsula. In Newberry we have a small hospital and clinic. Even though they are small I am still very grateful and proud of the services they provide to our community. Last year I enrolled in my schools Health CTE class, which is two hours a day. During last year's class I learned anatomy and physiology, how to wear PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) correctly, and also the different diseases that can affect different parts of the body. The second portion or second year of the Health CTE class has the students shadowing different departments at our hospital. Since I've started shadowing, I have learned so many things, but I have also seen some of the realities of working in healthcare and some of the challenges. There are two large challenges that I believe our rural area has in regards to preventative care and those are the expense or cost of preventative services and transportation issues.

The first challenge I will address is the transportation issue. In my small town we do not have any buses or other forms of public transportation that wouldn't cost the patient money. This means that people without vehicles are not able to go to their visits because they do not have a way to get there. I know that appointments can be done over the phone or through video but I do not believe these are the same as an in person visit. When a doctor is on the phone with a patient, they can't really understand the patient's mental state or if the patient has any visible bruises and/or pain. The doctor is unable to check a patient's blood pressure, heart rate and other vitals. My solution to the transportation issue would be for doctors to do at home preventative visits for patients with transportation issues. Instead of the patient coming to their doctor the doctor would go to the patient. Lab work could also be ordered and be done at the home at a later date.

Another challenge people face is the expense of preventative healthcare when they do not have insurance or their insurance policy does not cover the preventative services. My solution to this problem would be to have a free preventative clinic every six months which would give patients comfort knowing the preventative services are available for them and that they do not have to worry about having insurance coverage or the expense involved. In this free clinic a patient would be able to get their vitals checked, have any lab work done that is needed, and if needed any screening services like mammograms could be ordered. How can hospitals afford to do this? I think something that would help with the cost would be to make it into a teaching opportunity for students that are studying to become nurses, doctors, etc. This would be a great teaching opportunity because not only would the students learn from the patients and get more hands-on experience but they would learn how to only focus on the patient and not have to worry about all of the insurance information that a hospital has to deal with. When I was shadowing a Nurse Practitioner and I saw all of the paper work that was required just to see if a medication the patient needed would get covered by their insurance, it was very intimidating. The students would learn about patient care and would not have to deal with insurances and making sure things are covered. I personally think from experience it would benefit the students to be able to focus only on patient care.

To make sure everything runs smoothly there would be certified doctors and nurses supervising the students. They would oversee the students in case of an emergency, but the students would be doing most of the work. These free preventative clinics would not only be in my hometown but would be placed all over the U.P. in areas that have colleges with nursing programs. I believe this would be a huge benefit to both the patients and the student nurses and anyone else involved.

In the Fall of 2026, I will be attending Lake Superior State University and then will be applying for admission to their nursing program. Even though I am just at the beginning of my healthcare journey I feel very strongly that every person deserves to be taken care of and have preventative services available to them.