

Feasibility Study of Community Paramedicine for Chronic Disease Management in Rural Oklahoma

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According to the Rural Health Information Hub (2023), despite the many positive attributes and assets associated with working and living in rural communities, many rural American population groups experience significant health disparities. These disparities are often characterized by indicators such as higher incidence of disease and/or disability, higher mortality rates, lower life expectancies, and higher rates of chronic pain. Rural risk factors for health disparities include geographic isolation, lower socioeconomic status, higher rates of health risk behaviors, limited access to healthcare specialists and preventive health education. In Oklahoma, a rural area with health disparity is Delaware County. It is ranked 54th out of 77 counties for health factors including health behaviors, clinical care, and social and economic factors. 21% of the population describe their health as fair or poor (nearly double the US average). Heart disease is the leading cause of death, the obesity rate is 40% and 15% have type II diabetes. The goal of this research study is to determine the potential for a community paramedicine program to improve the overall health of residents in Delaware county by providing person-centered health care in rural areas of the county thereby reducing hospitalizations, improving chronic disease management, and providing efficient and timely referral to community services.