



# Primary Care Access to Healthcare in Rural Areas



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## Introduction:

A person's ability to access health services has a profound effect on every aspect of his or her health, yet at the start of the decade, almost 1 in 4 Americans do not have a primary care provider (PCP) or health center where they can receive regular medical services. Approximately 1 in 5 Americans (children and adults under age 65) do not have medical insurance.

People without medical insurance are more likely to lack a usual source of medical care, such as a PCP, and are more likely to skip routine medical care due to costs, increasing their risk for serious and disabling health conditions. When they do access health services, they are often burdened with large medical bills and out-of-pocket expenses. (Healthy People, 2020)

## Research Question:

For adults in rural communities, what is the effect of primary care access within the community on compliance with primary health care prevention and treatment compared to no primary care access within the community.

## Purpose:

Explore patients' perceptions of factors that combine to limit or prevent access to primary care in rural medically underserved areas or populations (Hewitt et al., 2019)

## Conceptual Framework:

Florence Nightingale's environmental theory goes along with healthcare access. This theory has environmental factors affecting health according to Nightingale's theory are fresh air, pure water, sufficient food and appropriate nutrition, efficient drainage, cleanliness, and light or direct sunlight. If any of these factors is lacking, it can delay the patient's recovery. (Nursing-theory, 2016)

## Methods:

- This study used qualitative and quantitative methods of research (Hewitt et al., 2019)
- A retrospective review of 1,868 Immediate Care patient charts was made to extract data on patient insurance type and patient provider type (Hewitt et al., 2019)
- The study procedure was two focus group sessions. They followed guidelines so that sessions would be alike.
- They began with a statement of the purpose and the goals along with a brief overview of the goals. (Hewitt et al., 2019)
- They were asked open ended questions. From there the patients were steer toward ease of making appointments, frequency of routine healthcare screening, delayed or foregone care, the need for specialty consults, along with utilization of the emergency department for non-urgent care. These sessions were recorded. (Hewitt et al., 2019)
- After the sessions, a transcriptionist would then transcribe the data. (Hewitt et al., 2019)
- Then the primary researcher, her chairperson, and her committee members used a qualitative content analysis technique to analyze the connect. (Hewitt et al., 2019)

## Results:

- The results were that patients with minor illnesses or injuries are choosing to visit the immediate care clinic when they're unable to see their primary care physician. (Hewitt et al., 2019)
- Insurance does not matter when it comes needing to see a physician at the clinic or emergency department. (Hewitt et al., 2019)
- Patients visited the immediate care clinic regardless of having a primary care physician also. Interpretation meaning that immediate care is a viable solution to the problem of foregone care, delayed care, and ED utilization for non-urgent problems. (Hewitt et al., 2019)

## Implications for Nursing:

- Nursing talent will play an essential role in expanding access to rural healthcare, but it will require a concerted effort to recruit, educate, train, and retain nurses in rural areas. (Cox, 2020.)
- Rural nursing is a high-need role for professionals excited to make a difference and pioneer innovative approaches to care. (Cox, 2020)
- In rural healthcare, the nursing profession can showcase the full range of its abilities and embrace the future of expanded nursing practice. (Cox, 2020.)
- Close collaboration between nursing educators, policymakers, regulators, and health systems will enable us to embrace these opportunities, making care more efficient, affordable and accessible for rural America. (Cox, 2020)

## References:

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