

**48th Annual Rural Health Conference  
10th Rural Hospital Innovation Summit  
May 20-23, 2025 – Atlanta, GA  
*Agenda***

**Tuesday, May 20, 2025**

**5 – 7 p.m.**

**Exhibit Hall Welcome**

**Wednesday, May 21, 2025**

**7 – 8 a.m.**

**Breakfast**

**8 – 9:30 a.m.**

**Opening Session & Keynote - TBA**

**9:30 – 10:45 a.m.**

**Concurrent Sessions**

**1A**

**Oral Health Session**

*TBD*

*TBD*

**1B**

**Changes in Rural Nursing Home Staffing and Quality**

**TBD**

*Michael Wirth, PhD, College of Nursing, University of South Carolina, Assistant Professor*

*Nicholas Yell, Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina,*

*Hari Sharma, PhD, University of Iowa, Assistant Professor*

*Elizabeth Crouch, PhD, Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina, Associate Professor*

Both nursing staff turnover and adverse quality measurements have increased over time in rural nursing homes, compared to their urban counterparts. This session will examine these changes as well as describing rural-urban differences in staffing turnover rates in nursing homes and how nursing home facility characteristics are changing over time.

**1C**

**Rural Aging**

*TBD*

TBD

**1D**

**MMIW: Addressing Ongoing Disparities and Injustice Today**

**TBD**

*Mary-Katherine McNatt, DrPH, MPH, ATSU College of Graduate Health Studies, Chair & Professor*

*Marsha Presley, PhD, MPH, ATSU College of Graduate Health Studies, Research Associate & Adjunct Faculty*

*Susan Thomas, MEd, BME., ATSU College of Graduate Health Studies, Instructional Designer & Adjunct Faculty*

This session addresses the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), highlighting the disproportionate violence they face. MMIW reflects systemic injustices including inadequate law enforcement, media neglect, and insufficient resources, and exacerbates intergenerational trauma. The session will also explore potential solutions to combat these ongoing issues.

**1E**

**Community Apgar Recruitment and Retention: Partnering for Rural Workforce**

**TBD**

*David Schmitz, MD, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Professor and Chair, Department of Family and Community Medicine*

*Mark Barclay, MS, CPRP, 3RNET, 3RNET Director of Member Services*

*Stacy Kusler, B.A, CPRP, UND Center for Rural health, Workforce Specialist*

The Community Apgar set of projects has increased in scope and geography for more than a decade to include recruitment and retention of physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and CEOs to rural hospitals, rural health clinics and rural FQHCs. This update will provide an overview of recent projects and research outcomes.

**1F**

**Driving Change: Meeting Transportation Needs in Rural Communities - FORHP**

*TBD*

TBD

**RHIS – Operations Track**

**Lessons Learned from Maine's Rural Maternity Crisis**

**TBD**

*Dora Anne Mills, MD, MPH, MaineHealth, MaineHealth Chief Health Improvement Officer*  
*Caroline Zimmerman, MPP, MaineHealth, Director of Child and Family Health at MaineHealth*

Learn how all of Maine's rural maternity hospitals joined together to address the crises of over one-third of Maine's rural hospitals having closed their maternity units and the health needs of rural perinatal patients, using a federal Health Resources and Services Administration RMOMS (Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies) grant.

## **RHIS – Innovations Track**

### **Communicating the Disadvantage of Medicare Advantage**

**TBD**

*Stephanie Limb, Groundswell Health, Senior Partner*

*Lance Lunsford, FACHE, Groundswell Health, Senior Partner*

*Melissa Lackey, RN, A&M Rural and Community Health Institute | Texas A&M Health, Director, Technical Assistance*

*Matthew Borchardt, CLA, principal*

Presentation will cover a multi-rural Texas hospital Medicare Advantage (MA) education & advocacy campaign to 1) educate consumers about the potential downfalls of selecting MA over Traditional Medicare and 2) educate lawmakers and other influencers on MA's negative impacts on rural hospitals' finances and providers and need for policy reform.

## **1G**

### **Contributed Research Papers**

**TBD**

**10:45 – 11:00 a.m.**

**Poster Session/Break**

**11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.**

### **Plenary Session – HRSA Rural Health Update**

This session will provide updates regarding key federal activities that help improve access to quality health care in rural communities.

**12:15 – 2:30 p.m.**

**Lunch**

**1:30 – 5:00 p.m.**

**Student Track Session/Student Constituency Group Meeting**

**2:30 – 3:45 p.m.**

## **Concurrent Sessions**

### **2A**

#### **Mental Health Prevalence, Providers and Services Among Rural Youth**

##### **Room TBD**

*Holly Andrilla, MS, WWAMI Rural Health Research Center, Deputy Director & Research Scientist  
Principal*

*Janessa Graves, PhD, WWAMI Rural Health Research Center, Director*

There is heightened concern nationally about youth mental health. We will present findings on the national prevalence of mental health disorders among rural youth, the distribution of youth mental health care providers, and the behavioral health care services received and distance travelled by youth covered by commercial and Medicaid insurance.

#### **Increase Capacity: Addressing Children's Mental Health in Primary Care**

##### **Room TBD**

*Julia Matakis, MPH, American Academy of Pediatrics, Senior Manager, Mental Health Programs*

The American Academy of Pediatrics provides training and technical assistance to primary care clinicians to ensure they have the knowledge, skill, and confidence needed to respond to mental/behavioral health concerns they see. Specific examples, lessons learned, and the impact on pediatric mental health practice in rural/frontier communities will be discussed.

### **2B**

#### **The Promise and Pitfalls of Alternative Delivery Modalities**

##### **TBD**

*Michele Stanek, MHS, SC Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare, Associate Director*

*Andrea Mitchell, MPH, SC Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare, Manager*

*Kevin Bennett, PhD, SC Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare, Director*

*Samantha Renaud, MA, SC Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare, Manager*

Improved access to quality primary care has long been a goal for rural communities. The pandemic accelerated the use of new modalities of care, including telemedicine and mobile healthcare. We'll discuss how these modalities are implemented, their impact on rural communities, and the potential negative tradeoffs for primary care.

### **2C**

#### **Meeting Rural People Where They Are**

##### **Room TBD**

*Alana Knudson, PhD, NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis, Director*

*Diane Hall, PhD, CDC Office of Rural Health, Director*

*Allen Smart, MPH, MP, PhilanthropywoRx, Founder*

*Jason Wesco, Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas, President & Chief Strategy Officer*

Learn how rural health providers are leveraging resources from community partners, foundations, and the private and public sectors to address patients' needs – food, housing, and transportation. Find out how the economic vitality of rural communities improves when social determinants of health are addressed. Resources and tools will be highlighted.

## **2D**

### **Exploring Rural Parent Perspectives on Routine Childhood Vaccination**

#### **Room TBD**

*Veronica Gilliard, PhD, MPH, MEd, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Communications Specialist*

*Erin Glotzer, MPH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Communications Specialist*

*Angela Tripp, MPH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Communications Specialist*

This presentation explores knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs on routine childhood vaccination through findings from 2023 focus groups with parents living in rural Midwestern and Southern communities who have children under age seven. These focus groups helped inform Keeps it that Way, CDC's new communications effort to promote routine childhood vaccination.

### **Rural Adult Immunization Pilot Project**

#### **Room TBD**

*Lindsey Haynes-Maslow, PhD, MHA, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Associate Professor*

*Shelley Miller, DNP, APRN, FNP-C, The University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Nursing, Assistant Professor*

*Beth O'Connor, M.Ed, Virginia Rural Health Association, Executive Director*

*Abby Gold, PhD, MPH, RD, University of Minnesota, Health & Nutrition Extension Specialist*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention partnered with Extension Foundation and National Rural Health Association to implement promising strategies for increasing vaccine confidence and uptake across three states in rural pilot sites with a targeted effort to engage the community by collaborating with Extension professionals and NRHA's provider members.

## **2E**

### **Rural Rotations Reimagined: Interprofessional Collaboration and Community Engage**

#### **Room TBD**

*Kelly Cochran, PharmD, BCPS, University of Missouri-School of Medicine-Columbia/Community Health Network, Adjunct Assistant Professor; Director of Ambulatory Care Pharmacy  
Linda Rucker, MU School of Medicine Rural Scholars Program, Office of Health, Outreach, Policy, and Education (HOPE), Program/Project Support Coordinator*

A 5-year review of Clinical Rural Immersion, an innovative model to engage health profession students, from rural and urban backgrounds, in rural clerkships and experiences to increase interest in rural clinical practice. Speakers will discuss activities, approaches to improve student engagement, and strategies to align the experience with course competencies.

### **The New Reality: Workforce Training Done Virtually**

#### **Room TBD**

*Dwain Harris, MHA, National AHEC Organization, Chief Executive Officer*

*David Gross, MHA, Northeast KY AHEC, Director*

*Sarah Matter, Montana Hospital Association, South Central Montana AHEC Program Specialist*

*Reed Elkington, Transfr Virtual Reality, Healthcare Team Lead*

Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) are uniquely positioned to cultivate rural healthcare professionals. Through a U.S. Department of Labor grant, AHECs in seven states are leveraging community partnerships and using virtual reality technology (which will be demonstrated during the session) to provide access to educational, career exploration, and employment opportunities.

## **2F**

### **FORHP Policy Update**

#### **Room TBD**

*Speakers TBD.*

Session description TBD.

### **RHIS - Operations Track: The Rural Oncology Home Model**

#### **Room TBD**

*Wade Swenson, MD, MPH, MBA, Rural Cancer Institute, Founder*

*Emily Westergard, DO, Rural Cancer Institute, Co-Founder*

*Zach Schroeder, BA, Rural Cancer Institute, Co-Founder*

The Rural Oncology Home Model addresses cancer care access challenges in rural regions. The model centralizes services within a critical access hospital, emphasizing local care management and palliative support. It benefits from collaborations with regional health centers and local partners underscoring a shift toward localized care.

**RHIS - Innovations Track: Alternative Payment Models for Rural Hospitals: Assembly Required  
Room TBD**

*April Ferrino, TX Health and Human Services Commission, Director, Office of Rural Hospital Finance & Coordination*

*Theresa Lampkin Tamura, Washington Health Care Authority, Operations and Engagement Strategist; former CHART Model Director, Washington Health Care Authority*

The federal Community Health Access and Rural Transformation (CHART) Model was an unsuccessful alternative payment model for rural hospitals, yet two very different states were able to use the Model's momentum to make positive impacts in rural communities. Texas and Washington will share takeaways that other states could replicate.

**2G**

**Contributed Research Papers**

- TBA

**3:45 – 4:00 p.m.**

**Poster Session/Break**

**4:00 – 5:15 p.m.**

**Concurrent Sessions**

**3A**

**Rural Disparities in Cancer Incidence, Screening and Utilization**

**Room TBD**

*Cassie Odahowski, PhD, Rural and Minority Health Research Center, University of South Carolina, Research Assistant Professor*

*Whitney Zahnd, PhD, RUPRI Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis, University of Iowa, Deputy Director*

*Gabriel Benavidez, PhD, Department of Public Health, Baylor University, Assistant Professor*

*Nicholas Yell, PhD, Rural and Minority Health Research Center, University of South Carolina, Doctoral Research Assistant*

This session will include: 1) describe pre and post COVID trends in rural disparities in cancer incidence and screening; 2) discussion of how 2021 US Preventive Services Task Force changes to lung cancer screening recommendations impact rural screening eligibility and utilization; 3) implications for rural healthcare providers, systems, and communities.

**3B**

**Serving Rural Veterans: Coordinating Care in Rural Communities**

### **Room TBD**

*Peter Kaboli, MD, MS, Department of Veterans Affairs, Executive Director, VA Office of Rural Health*

*David Walker, MD, MBA, FACHE, Veterans Health Administration, Network Director, VISN 7 (Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina)*

Rural Veterans receive care in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and their communities. Coordinating care can challenge Veterans, caregivers, VHA, and rural healthcare systems. Facilitating medical record exchange, scheduling specialty care, connecting to benefits, and timely reimbursement can optimize health outcomes for rural Veterans and support their communities.

### **VA/FQHC Partnerships for Shared Care of Rural Veterans**

#### **Room TBD**

*Carolyn Turvey, Ph.D., Veterans Health Administration, Clinical Director, VA Office of Rural Health Veterans Rural Health Resource Center - Iowa City*

*Bryan Weichelt, Ph.D., Marshfield Clinic Research Institute, Associate Research Scientist*

*Matthew Bryant Howren, Ph.D., Iowa City VA Health Care System, Core Investigator*

*Michael Ohl, MD, Iowa City VA Healthcare System, Staff Physician*

Three programs facilitate care of rural Veterans between VA and FQHCs/CAHs. One trains community coordinators to identify and address veterans' unmet medical and social/financial needs. Another develops telemedicine for cancer survivorship coordination between VA oncologists and community providers. Another describes a telemedicine consultation service between VA and CAH acute care.

### **3C**

#### **Telehealth Technology-Enabled Learning Program- Office Advancement of Telehealth**

##### **Room TBD**

*April Kinyua, Health Resources and Service Administration, Public Health Analyst*

*Melody Williams, MPH, Health Resources and Service Administration, Public Health Analyst*

*Katy Allison, PhD, MPH, CHES, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Research Assistant Professor, Health Behavior & Health Education*

The Telehealth Technology-Enabled Learning Program supports the development of learning community models to connect providers, often located in remote areas, with specialists that help train these providers patients with complex conditions in their communities.

### **3D**

#### **An Integrated CHW-Navigator Model for Reentry**

##### **TBD**



*Deb Koester, PhD, DNP, Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, Marshall University, Assistant Professor, Director of Community Health*  
*Bev Sharp, B.S. (Criminal Justi, The REACH Initiative, Executive Director*  
*Kim Tieman, MSW, ACSW, Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, Vice President and Program Director for Health*

Many incarcerated have chronic health conditions, which worsen during incarceration and upon release due to barriers to care, especially in rural communities. This model integrates a community health worker and peer navigator in rural Appalachia to address healthcare, social, and community reentry needs to improve outcomes and reduce costs.

### **Leveraging Grants and Partnerships to Support Rural CHWs**

**TBD**

*Denaé Hebert, MBA/HCA, CHC, CRHCP, Louisiana Rural Health Association, Executive Director*  
*Jantz Malbrue, MSPH, Louisiana Office of Public Health, Bureau of Regional and Clinical Operations, Population Health Manager*

*This presentation will review the Community HealthWays Program Community Health Worker model within the Louisiana Department of Health, including how federal funding was leveraged to establish and expand the Program. We will then examine the Program's partnerships with the Louisiana Rural Health Association to expand the scope and impact.*

**3E**

### **Planning for the Future Rural Nursing Workforce**

**TBD**

*Qian Huang, Ph.D., MA, MPA, East Tennessee State University, Research Assistant Professor*  
*Casey Balio, Ph.D., East Tennessee State University, Research Assistant Professor*  
*Holly Andrilla, MS, WWAMI Rural Health Research Center, Deputy Director*  
*Janessa Graves, PhD, MPH, WWAMI Rural Health Research Center, Co-Director*

*Explore the current landscape of the rural nursing workforce across multiple dimensions, geographies, and settings. We will then discuss how to use these tools with innovative solutions and collaborative strategies to address the unique challenges faced by the nursing workforce in rural communities.*

### **Rural Roots: Growing Nurses through Community Engagement**

**TBD**

*Aspen Drude, MBA, University of Texas at Arlington, Director, Center for Rural Health and Nursing*  
*SuLynn Mester, DNP, MSN, RHCNOC, RN, University of Texas at Arlington, Clinical Assistant Professor & Liaison Team Member*

This session will highlight strategies for fostering local nurses in rural areas through university-community partnerships (specifically through the University of Texas at Arlington's liaison team). It will explore initiatives to enhance education, support, and retention, ensuring healthcare sustainability within hometown settings.

### **3F**

#### **Aligning Health and Social Needs: New Medicare Services (FORHP)**

**Room TBD**

*Speakers TBD*

Session description TBD.

#### **RHIS – Operations Track**

##### **Critical Access Hospital Swing Bed Quality Outcomes Data**

**TBD**

*Lindsay Corcoran, MHA, Stroudwater Associates, Principal*

In partnership with the University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center, Stroudwater developed the national standard for Critical Access Hospital swing bed quality outcome measures. Since 2018, hospitals have been collecting and submitting swing bed patient-level data elements. This presentation will review performance trends and share best practice hospital spotlights.

#### **RHIS – Innovations Track**

##### **Maintaining Independence through Interdependence - Rural Hospital CINs**

**TBD**

*Nate White, JD, Cibolo Health, CEO*

*Ben Bucher, FNP-BC, MBA, LNHA, Towner County Medical Center, CEO*

*Clint MacKinney, MD, MS, Cibolo Health, Chief Medical Officer*

*Ken Westman, MPH, Riverwood Healthcare, CEO*

Two states, and others in discussions, have created high value networks (HVN) in their states composed of rural, independent hospital systems. These HVN models, composed of a clinically integrated network and shared services, transform the future of viability for their rural health systems and pave a way to achieve value-based care.

### **3G**

#### **Contributed Research Papers**

**TBA**

**Thursday, May 22, 2025**

**8:00 – 9:00 a.m.**

**Constituency Group Meetings and Continental Breakfast**

**9:00 – 10:15 a.m.**

**Concurrent Sessions**

**4A**

**Optimizing Rural Pain Care**

**Room TBD**

*Travis Lovejoy, PhD, MPH, VHA Office of Rural Health, Clinical Director, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center*

*Rena E. Courtney, PhD, PREVAIL Center for Chronic Pain, Salem VA Health Care System, Program Director*

*John Evans, BA, VA Eastern Colorado Health Systems Research Center of Innovation, Health Science Specialist and Program Manager, Vet-to-Vet Chronic Pain Program*

Despite increased availability of evidence-based approaches for pain management, many patients who reside in rural areas receive suboptimal pain treatment. This workshop will present three innovative models of rural pain care that have been tested in the Veterans Health Administration: (1) shared appointments, (2) care coordination, and (3) peer support.

**4B**

**Rural Hospital Sustainability through Clinically Integrated Networks**

**TBD**

*Shena Popat, MHA, NORC Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis, Senior Research Scientist*  
*Paul Aslin, MHA, Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals Clinically Integrated Network, Executive Director*

*Alfred Sams, MA, Rough Rider High Value Network, President*

*Reyann Davis, MPH, Texas A&M Rural and Community Health Institute, Director Value-Based Care*

The Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals (TORCH) Clinically Integrated Network and Rough Rider High Value Network were recently formed to facilitate rural provider participation in alternative payment models. This panel will explore the formation and operation of these networks, with a focus on lessons learned and future opportunities.

**4C**

**Addressing the Challenge of Rural Pharmacy Closures**

**TBD**

*David Nau, PhD, RPh, Raabe College of Pharmacy, Ohio Northern University, Professor*

*Stuart Beatty, PharmD, Raabe College of Pharmacy, Ohio Northern University, Dean*  
*Emily Eddy, PharmD, Raabe College of Pharmacy, Ohio Northern University, Associate Professor*  
*Michelle Musser, PharmD, Raabe College of Pharmacy, Ohio Northern University, Professor*

Over 7,000 pharmacies have closed in the past decade leaving many rural communities with decreased access to medications, immunizations and pharmacist services. This session will describe how communities can maintain access to pharmacist services and will describe how novel services are being deployed in rural Ohio.

### **Bridging Medication Disparities in Rural Healthcare**

#### **Room TBD**

*Stephanie Kiser, RPh, UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy, Executive Director, Rural Pharmacy Health Initiative*

*Nicole Allen, DO, Mountain Community Health Partnership - FQHC, Family Medicine Physician - Bakersville Health Center*

*Emily Owens, PharmD, CPP, Bakersville Health Center, Mountain Community Health Partnership, Clinical Pharmacy Practitioner*

What barriers to optimal medication use exist for residents in rural WNC? What facilitates health improvement related to medications? These questions will be answered in this presentation of a patient-centered, interprofessional, multifactorial, regional medication needs assessment. Recommendations for further opportunities to improve health outcomes and medication optimization will be shared.

### **4D**

#### **Securing a Better Future for Rural Health**

#### **Room TBD**

*Keith Mueller, University of Iowa, Director, Rural Policy Research Institute*

*Brock Slabach, Chief Operating Officer*

*JT Douglas, West Health Foundation, Director of Strategy*

This session will present the results of a special summit in November 2024 to develop a comprehensive vision for the future of rural health, convened by three partner organizations: Rural Policy Research Institute, National Rural Health Association, and West Health. Speakers will describe results and next steps.

### **4E**

#### **Medicare Policy Impacts on Rural Mental Health Workforce**

#### **TBD**

*Janessa Graves, PhD MPH, WWAMI Rural Health Research Center, Director*

*Holly Andrilla, MS, WWAMI Rural Health Research Center, Deputy Director*

Recent Medicare policy expanded reimbursement eligibility (effective 01/01/2024) for marriage and family therapists and mental health counselors to address behavioral health workforce shortages. This panel presents research on workforce changes and key informant interview results and discusses barriers and solutions to fully leveraging the new policy in rural settings.

**4F**

**Efforts to Support Rural Maternal Health (FORHP)**

**Room TBD**

*Speakers TBD*

Description TBD

**RHIS – Operations Track**

**The Rural Hospital Nexus of Cyber and AI**

**TBD**

*Laura Kreofsky, MHA, MBA, Microsoft Philanthropies, Microsoft Rural Health Tech Program Director*

Rural Hospitals face unique Digital Health challenges. Advancement relies on a foundation of cyber resiliency and skilling, accelerated through pragmatic Artificial Intelligence enabling access, whole person care, and financial stability. This session spotlights best practices for surfacing and governing risk factors – including cybersecurity - in AI and Digital Health.

**RHIS – Innovations Track**

**Strategies for Strengthening Existing Partnerships**

**Room TBD**

*Jeffrey Sommer, MPP, Stroudwater Associates, Managing Director*

*Clare Kelley, MPH, Stroudwater Associates, Senior Consultant*

Approximately 60% of rural hospitals are in larger systems. Enhancing existing partnerships to recognize the value of rural affiliates and achieve the value potential of the partnership is essential. Case studies and a framework for operationalizing and enhancing rural value within systems will be shared with participants.

**4G**

**Contributed Research Papers**

**TBA**

**10:15 – 10:45 a.m.**

**Poster Session/Break**

**10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**Concurrent Sessions**

**5A**

**Primary Care Strategies to Address Rural Specialist Gaps**

**Rooms TBD**

*Rosemary Motz, MPH, MA, RDN, Moses/Weitzman Health System, Senior Program Manager at the Weitzman Institute*

*Benjamin D. Anderson, MBA, MHCDS, Hutchinson Regional Medical Center, President and Chief Executive Officer*

*Daren Anderson, MD, Moses/Weitzman Health System, VP/Chief Quality Officer of Community Health Center, Inc. and President of ConferMED*

Specialty care is limited in rural communities—with 30 specialists per 100,000 people, versus 263 in urban settings. Primary care providers are often more accessible and may fill specialty gaps within their scope. This panel of interprofessional healthcare leaders explores innovative strategies for rural primary care to deliver specialty services.

**The Stroke Care Crisis in Rural America**

**TBD**

*Timothy Schoonover, DO, FACN, Dayton Center for Neurological Disorders, Kettering Health Stroke Medical Director*

Stroke mortality rates are higher in rural areas. Proximity to care matters, but management of stroke patients can be improved. Policymakers, neurosurgeons and front-line staff discuss how to close the gaps in stroke care. This includes educating EMS providers and patients, standardizing protocols and building relationships with other providers.

**5B**

**Using AI To Improve Rural Patient Care**

**Room TBD**

*Randall Brandt, PA-C, Mile Bluff Medical Center, Physician Assistant, Lead Advanced Practice Clinician*

Mile Bluff Medical Center recently deployed a new AI solution that has fundamentally transformed how clinicians at the Mauston, Wisconsin based organization use relevant information from multiple sources to make the best care decisions for their patients, reducing the cognitive burden that providers typically experience when manually searching for data.

**5C**

## **Effective Rural Programs to Prevent Unintentional Injuries**

### **Room TBD**

*Alana Knudson, PhD, NORC at the University of Chicago, Senior Fellow*

*Kristine Sande, Rural Health Information Hub, Program Director*

*Jaime Sullivan, National Center for Rural Road Safety, Director*

*Jane Strommen, PhD, North Dakota State University, Gerontology Specialist and Assistant Professor of Practice*

*Cynthia Goss, MA, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center-Salt Lake City Population Specialist*

Learn about the new Rural Unintentional Injury Prevention Toolkit, featuring practical information and effective program models to reduce injuries and deaths developed by the Rural Health Information Hub and NORC Walsh Center. Two rural implementers will share successful strategies for program planning, evaluation, funding, and sustainability.

## **5D**

### **Aging and Caregiving in Rural America**

#### **Room TBD**

*Elizabeth Crouch, University of South Carolina, Director, Associate Professor*

*Carrie Henning-Smith, PhD, University of Minnesota, Associate Professor*

*Peiyin Hung, PhD, University of South Carolina, Associate Professor, Deputy Director*

*Emma Boswell, MPH, University of South Carolina, Research Associate*

Population aging, the proportion of the population aged 65 plus, is increasing much more in rural areas than urban. A comprehensive examination of aging and caregiving challenges for rural residents has been limited. This session will examine rural-urban differences in aging and caregiving status by both researchers and practitioners.

### **Tools to Develop Rural Multisector Plans for Aging**

#### **Room TBD**

*Pauline DeLange Martinez, PhD, MA, UC Davis, Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing, Family Caregiving Institute, Research & Community Engagement Manager*

The Rural Multisector Plan for Aging (MPA) Initiative was launched in California in 2022, funding advocacy coalitions in seven counties. The initiative established Advisory Committees, engaged diverse stakeholders, and developed local MPAs and a 'Rural MPA Toolkit' to support replication in other rural communities to create inclusive, local aging plans.

## **5E**

### **Growing the Rural Nursing Workforce: Enhancing Retention/Expanding NP-Led Clinics**

#### **Room TBD**

*Nicole Peters Kroll, PhD FNP-BC PMHNP-BC, TAMU School of Nursing, Associate Dean for Clinical & Outreach Affairs / Clinical Associate Professor*  
*Kelly Wilson, PhD, MCHES, Texas A&M University, School of Nursing, Professor*  
*Elizabeth Ellis, APRN, DNP, FNP-BC, TAMU School of Nursing, Assistant Director Clinical & Outreach Affairs*

The complexities of rural recruitment and retention of the healthcare workforce are well known. Texas A&M is addressing rural healthcare workforce challenges by expanding nursing recruitment through school health professions exposure, offering scholarships for rural students, establishing nurse practitioner-led mobile clinics, and enhancing curricula with hands-on experience in rural areas.

**5F**

**Rural Community Partnerships to Address Public and Community Health Workforce Needs (FORHP)**

**Room TBD**

*Speakers TBD*

Description TBD

**RHIS – Operations Track**

**Driving Financial Sustainability Through Transformation of Hospital Operations**

**TBD**

*James Wilson, MBA, Mayo Clinic Health System, Chief Financial Officer*

*Prathiba Varkey, MBBS, MBA, Mayo Clinic Health System, President, Mayo Clinic Health System*

*Chris Hasse, PhD, MBA, Mayo Clinic Health System, Chief Administrative Officer*

Post COVID, costs for healthcare organizations continue to increase while reimbursement levels can't catch up. We will discuss how we empowered our teams for financial sustainability in today's environment. We will describe five pillars used by our Sustainable Management Above Reimbursement Transformation (SMART) initiative to reduce expenses and/or enhance revenue.

**RHIS – Innovations Track**

**Lessons Learned from the Rural Obstetrics Innovations Summit**

**Room TBD**

*Erin Sullivan, PhD, Suffolk University, Associate Professor*

*Eric Shell, MBA, CPA*

*Sarah Moore, MD*

*Andrew Hannapel, MD*



The presenters will share key insights on innovations, leadership qualities, and strategies for success discussed at the 2024 Rural Obstetrics Innovations Summit. They will also explore lessons learned from the Summit via two case studies that highlight the challenges of maintaining obstetrics programs in rural hospitals.

## **5G**

### **Contributed Research Papers**

**TBA**

**12:00 – 1:45 p.m.**

### **Rural Health Awards Luncheon**

Join NRHA for a tribute to the 2025 Rural Health Award winners.

**2:00-3:15 p.m.**

### **Terry Reilly Lecture - TBA**

**3:15 – 3:30 p.m.**

### **Poster Session/Break**

**3:30 – 4:45 p.m.**

### **Concurrent Sessions**

## **6A**

### **Perinatal Substance Use and Treatment in Rural America**

#### **Room TBD**

*Peiyin Hung, PhD, University of South Carolina Rural and Minority Health Research Center, Co-Director and Associate Professor*

*KariLynn Dowling-McClay, PharmD, MPH, BCACP, ETSU/NORC Rural Health Equity Research Center, Assistant Professor*

*Emma Boswell, MPH, University of South Carolina Rural and Minority Health Research Center, Research Associate*

Perinatal substance use is an escalating concern, given its strong links with perinatal depression and severe maternal morbidity, disproportionately affecting rural pregnant/postpartum women. This session will present comprehensive national data on rural-urban disparities in perinatal substance use and highlight evidence-based buprenorphine therapy for birthing individuals with opioid use disorders.

### **Rural Community Strategies to Address Opioid Use Disorder**

#### **Room TBD**

*Carrie Howard, MA, CPHQ, CPPS, Stratis Health, Program Manager*

*Erin Foss, RN, CARN, CCHP, Stratis Health, Clinical Subject Matter Expert, Addiction Medicine*

This session describes rural-relevant multi-modal approaches to address opioid use disorder (OUD) including addressing stigma, training clinicians and care teams, improving law enforcement and correctional approaches to OUD, and engaging community members. The session shares successful strategies and tools which can be rapidly replicated or adapted.

## **6B**

### **Strengthening Infection Prevention in Rural Healthcare Facilities**

#### **Room TBD**

*Stephen Perez, PhD, RN, CRNP, CDC, Nurse Epidemiologist and Team Lead for Priority Populations Team*

*Aqueelah Barrie, MPH, MBA, CDC, Public Health Program Manager, Priority Populations Team*

*Victoria Russo, CIC, MPH, CDC, Epidemiologist*

*Jackie Woodring, MA, CDC, Lead, Project Firstline Communications Strategy Team*

Rural healthcare facilities have competing priorities and may face challenges implementing infection prevention and control (IPC) initiatives. This session will provide an overview of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) Project Firstline (PFL) educational resources and discuss strategies that strengthen IPC practices and protect frontline healthcare workers and their patients.

## **6C**

### **Replicable Digital Strategies to Support Rural Mental Health**

#### **Room TBD**

*Julianna Hogan, PhD, Michael E DeBakey VA Medical Center, Psychologist*

*Jan Lindsay, PhD, Co-Director, South Central MIRECC*

*Katherine Bay, PhD, MEDVAMC, Health Science Specialist*

*Kathleen Grubbs, PhD, Little Rock VA Medical Center, Psychologist*

Explore 3 innovations for remotely delivered mental health (MH) care for rural Veterans: decision aid for VA-developed apps; Patient Generated Health Data to enhance web-based programming; and digital MH clinic infrastructure recommendations. This session offers practical, scalable tools to enhance access, improve engagement, support providers, and bridge the digital divide.

### **Telemedicine Solutions for Reducing Mental Health Burden**

#### **Room TBD**

*Amber Reints, CNP, PMHNP, Avel eCare, Director of Behavioral Health Services*

With the growing mental health crisis and staffing shortages, critical access hospitals face long ER stays for patients needing outpatient services. This session explores innovative telemedicine strategies to provide timely behavioral health support for rural populations.

## **6D**

### **Rural Public Health Messaging: Respecting Literacy, Culture, and Language**

#### **Room TBD**

*Kay Miller Temple, MD MMC, University of North Dakota Center for Rural Health, Content writer, Rural Health Information Hub*

*Darci Graves, MPP, MA, MA, Office of Minority Health Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Technical Director*

*Diane Hall, PhD, MEd, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Director, Office of Rural Health*

Effective communication and increased patient understanding leads to better health outcomes. This session reviews plain language, health literacy, and culturally and linguistically appropriate messaging that can impact public health and the content of health information so that it may be tailored for rural health delivery organizations.

## **6E**

### **Texas A&M/NRHA CHW**

#### **Room TBD**

*Speakers TBD*

Description TBD

## **6F**

### **From Dreams to Fruition: A Roadmap for Launching Rural Residency Programs (FORHP)**

#### **Room TBD**

*Lori Rodefeld, MS, Wisconsin Collaborative for Rural GME / Rural WI Health Cooperative, Director of GME Development*

*Emily Hawes, PharmD, CPP, University of North Carolina / Rural Residency Planning and Development Technical Assistance Center, Professor / Deputy Director*

*John Waits, MD, Cahaba Medical Care, CEO and Residency Program Director*

*Jason Steele, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, Public Health Analyst*

Rural communities grapple with shortages of primary care physicians. Despite evidence that rural training increases physician retention in underserved areas, graduate medical education

remains scarce in rural communities. Engage with experts to explore a roadmap and examples of how rural healthcare organizations can build a foundation for future residency training.

## **RHIS – Operations Track**

### **The Road to Financial and Operational Success**

#### **Room TBD**

*Ralph Llewellyn, CPA, Eide Bailly LLP, Partner*

*Brian Bertsch, Eide Bailly LLP, Principal*

*Jared Heim, CPA, Eide Bailly LLP, Partner*

The road to financial and operational success for rural providers is a bumpy one at best. Over time, common replicable opportunities have been identified to achieve long term success and sustainability. This session will explore these opportunities and strategies that can be employed by providers.

## **RHIS- Innovations Track**

### **AI: The New Landscape**

#### **Room TBD**

*Kayur Patel, MD, MRO, FACP, FACPE, MDExperts LLC, MD*

Healthcare leaders are pivotal in guiding hospitals towards harnessing the potential of AI to deliver superior care, optimize operations and drive innovation. This presentation aims to equip healthcare leaders with the knowledge & skills to navigate the integration of AI effectively, fostering innovation ensuring the highest standard of care and ethical practice.

## **6G**

### **Contributed Research Papers**

**TBA**

**Friday, May 23, 2025**

**8:00-9:30 a.m.**

### **Washington Update**

*Carrie Cochran-McClain, National Rural Health Association, Chief Policy Officer*

Join rural health's top federal lobbyist for an insider's update about what's going on in Washington and what to expect in the next year.

**9:30 – 9:45 a.m.**

**Break**

**9:45 – 11:00 a.m.**

**Concurrent Sessions**

**7A**

**Addressing Maternal Health Disparities: Strategies for Primary Care**

**Room TBD**

*Ariel Porto, MPH, Moses/Weitzman Health System, Assistant Director of Education Operations  
Lauren Hughes, MD, MPH, MSc, FAAFP, University of Colorado School of Medicine; Eugene S.  
Farley, Jr. Health Policy Center, Associate Professor of Family Medicine; State Policy Director  
Meghan Constantino, CNM, Community Health Center, Inc., Nurse Midwife*

With sufficient training, rural primary care teams are well-positioned to address risk factors related to maternal morbidity and mortality. This multidisciplinary panel explores steps rural providers and leaders are taking to improve maternal health outcomes, best practice recommendations for primary care, and how a community of practice supports these initiatives.

**Bridging Rural Maternal Care Gaps: Telehealth, Access, & Cost**

*Peiyin Hung, Rural & Minority Health Research Center, Deputy Director and Associate Professor  
Sayward Harrison, University of South Carolina Department of Psychology, Associate Professor  
and Director*

*Jiani Yu, Weill Cornell Medicine Department of Population Health Sciences, Assistant Professor  
Nansi Boghossian, University of South Carolina Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics,  
Associate Professor*

This session will discuss recent findings from NIH-funded research on rural-urban and racial/ethnic disparities in maternal telehealth uptake, policy, and care patterns. Attendees will learn about rural telehealth use patterns for prenatal/postpartum care across 50 states with varying telehealth policies and associations of telehealth use with access, outcomes, and expenditures.

**7B**

**Swing Bed Quality Measures**

**TBD**

*TBA*

Description TBD.

**7C**

**Telerehabilitation Initiatives to Improve Access for Rural Veterans**

**Room TBD**

*Keith Myers, PT, DPT, MBA, Veterans Health Administration Office of Rural Health, Co-Director, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center*

*Sergio Romero, PhD, Veterans Health Administration Office of Rural Health, Co-Director, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center*

*Consuelo Kreider, PhD, OTR/L, University of Florida, Clinical Associate Professor*

*Steven Kostas, MS, CCC-SLP, Veterans Health Administration Office of Rural Health, Program Director, Rural Veterans Telerehabilitation Initiative*

This session will present innovative approaches to provide rehabilitation services to Veterans living in rural areas. National level Veterans Administration, Office of Rural Health, programs and research projects utilizing a range of telehealth applications and technologies will be discussed.

## **7D**

### **Using Area-Level Vulnerability Measures in Policy and Practice**

#### **Room TBD**

*Casey Balio, PhD, ETSU/NORC Rural Health Equity Research Center, Research Assistant Professor*

*Diane Hall, PhD, MEd, CDC Office of Rural Health, Director*

*Sarah Tennyson, MPH, Transylvania County Public Health, Region 1 Public Health Workforce Development Director*

*Michael Meit, MA, MPH, ETSU/NORC Rural Health Equity Research Center, Deputy Director*

Area-level vulnerability indices (e.g. Social Vulnerability Index, Area Deprivation Index) are widely used in policy, yet the implications for rural communities are unknown. This session will present academic, federal, and local perspectives on how indices vary by rurality, how they are being used, and considerations for their use moving forward.

## **7E**

### **FARMIing Physicians for Rural South Dakota**

#### **Room TBD**

*Janet Fulk, University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine, Assistant Director, Frontier and Rural Medicine (FARM)*

*Gaven Bowman, University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine*

The University of South Dakota's Frontier and Rural Medicine program strives to invigorate the rural physician workforce by providing longitudinal, immersive, hands-on clinical training in rural and frontier communities. Fostering early commitment to rural medical practice strengthens workforce retention, healthcare access, clinical outcomes, and overall patient-centered continuity.

## **Creating Synergy: Rural Residencies and Medical Student Education**

**TBD**

*Meghan Meyers, EdD, University of Missouri - Columbia, Senior Program Coordinator*

*Whitney LeFevre, MD, University of Missouri - Columbia, Assistant Professor of Family and Community Medicine/Rural Scholars Medical Director*

*Misty Todd, MD, Bothwell Regional Health Center, Bothwell-University of Missouri Rural Family Medicine Residency Director*

*Ellie Euer, BA, Bothwell Regional Health Center, Graduate Medical Education Site Coordinator*

Rural medical education programs are needed to increase the rural physician workforce. This session will describe how one rural health system has integrated graduate and undergraduate medical education activities to address the rural physician workforce shortage. Lessons learned, best practices, and benefits will be discussed.

**7F**

**TBD (FORHP)**

**Room TBD**

*Speakers TBD*

Description TBD.

**7G**

**Contributed Research Papers**

**TBA**

**11:00 a.m.**

**End of Annual Conference**