

Improving healthcare in rural communities

For people who reside in rural communities, access to healthcare services is often limited. Some rural facilities may not be equipped to handle transitional care or specialized follow-up care after a life-changing illness or event. Allevant Solutions, LLC., a collaborative effort of Mayo Clinic and Select Medical, is a resource available to make improved healthcare a reality.

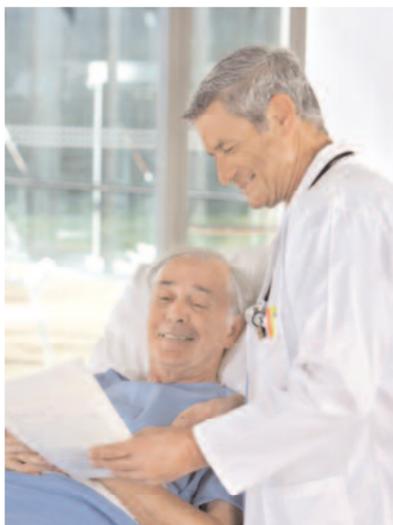
According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, one-quarter of America's population lives in rural areas, where hospital closures have had a profound impact on access to healthcare. Compared to people who live closer to cities, rural residents generally have fewer doctors and fewer resources. In addition, ventilator or transitional care services may not be readily available locally.

Other difficulties include delivering services that target special health needs to rural areas. Low population density can make it difficult to advertise important health screenings, distribute vaccines, such as influenza or shingles, and newborn and young children may not receive the routine screenings and immunizations required for proper health.

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has identified some key factors notable in rural areas:

- Rural residents average fewer physician visits or calls than people living in urban communities.
- There is a lack of adequate support training for emergency medical personnel in rural America.
- Rural hospitals are shifting toward outpatient services due to a lack of funding or a lack of staff.

There is no easy solution to the situ-



Steps are being taken to improve healthcare services in rural areas.

ation, and government and nonprofit agencies have begun programs to revitalize care options in rural communities. Two notable organizations are already developing ways to strengthen care options in rural locations. Mayo Clinic and Select Medical formed Allevant Solutions to develop ventilator weaning and transitional care programs. Through consulting services, Allevant will guide hospitals and skilled nursing facilities through the business end of remaining viable in today's world. Presenting cost-savings advice and developing management strategies to enable local hospitals to remain relevant to their communities, facilities can spend more time doing what they do best — offering quality care. Side effects of a stronger rural healthcare system are the creation of

new jobs in areas where current healthcare opportunities have been stagnant, and keeping hospital doors open — reducing the number of lay-offs.

“Our healthcare colleagues in rural areas fulfill a vital role, and just like their urban counterparts, they need to prepare for the future,” said Thomas Buckingham, president of Allevant Solutions. “With the nation's population aging, healthcare providers in all markets will need to admit an increasing number of patients with medically complex conditions. Allevant Solutions will help rural healthcare providers put in place the resources necessary to meet these growing needs in their communities.”

As they build relationships with medical centers in the area, Allevant Solutions encourages individuals living in rural communities to follow these important health guidelines.

- Schedule a health screening and physical every year.
- Visit a hospital in an emergency situation even if you do not have health insurance. Most hospitals will not refuse care in the absence of health insurance.
- Follow physicians' recommendations for follow-up care after a major illness or injury.
- Establish a support system for transporting elderly residents or those without transportation to and from health centers.
- Voice your opinion to doctors and health-services providers on how they can improve their services.

Rural healthcare facilities, including nursing homes and rural hospitals, are urged to learn more about Allevant Solutions to lower costs and offer improved services to their clientele. More information is available at www.allevant.com.