Negotiating the Terrain: The Challenges and Rewards of Rural Nursing

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Wendy Herbers, School of Health Sciences, U of L
Drs. Ray Bollman,
  Valerie du Plessis,
  Roland Beshiri - Statistics Canada
Ernie Dal Grande - Health Canada
Increased Interest in “Rural”
What Is Rural?
Geographic Building Blocks

* Census Subdivision (CSD) 5,984 CSD

* Census Division (CD) 288 CD
Predominantly Rural Region -

More than 50% of the population living in rural communities and population density <150 person/km²

Beshiri & Bollman (2001)
Demography: Population Structure

- 31.4 percent of Canada’s population lives in predominantly rural regions (in 1996)

- “predominantly rural regions” have over 50 percent of their population living in rural communities

(A rural community is a census consolidated subdivision with less than 150 persons per square kilometer. Census divisions are used to delineate “regions”, to facilitate comparisons with other OECD countries.)
In 1996, 31.4 percent of Canada's population lived in predominantly rural regions.

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1981 - 1996. A predominantly rural region has over 50 percent of its population living in rural communities. An intermediate region has 15 to 49 percent living rural communities and a predominantly urban region has less than 15 percent of its population living in rural communities.
In 1996, 31.4 percent of Canada's population lived in predominantly rural regions.

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1981 - 1996. A predominantly rural region has over 50 percent of its population living in rural communities. An intermediate region has 15 to 49 percent living rural communities and a predominantly urban region has less than 15 percent of its population living in rural communities.
Percent distribution of Canada's predominantly rural population among the provinces

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1996. A predominantly rural region has 50 percent or more of its population living in rural communities.
490 thousand Manitobans live in predominantly rural regions

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1981 - 1996. A predominantly rural region has over 50 percent of its population living in rural communities. An intermediate region has 15 to 49 percent living rural communities and a predominantly urban region has less than 15 percent of its population living in rural communities.
In 1996, 15 percent of Canada's population lived in rural metro-adjacent regions.

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1981 - 1996. A predominantly rural region has over 50 percent of its population living in rural communities. An intermediate region has 15 to 49 percent living rural communities and a predominantly urban region has less than 15 percent of its population living in rural communities.
Population growth is smaller in predominantly rural regions

A predominantly rural region has over 50 percent of its population living in rural communities. An intermediate region has 15 to 49 percent living rural communities and a predominantly urban region has less than 15 percent of its population living in rural communities.

Population growth is larger in rural regions adjacent to metro centres.

Rural and Small Town

Outside the commuting zones of larger urban centres (with 10,000 or more)

duPlessis, Beshiri, & Bollman (2000)
Demography: Population Growth

• At the Canada level, the rural and small town population is increasing.

• In Newfoundland and Saskatchewan, the rural and small town population has been decreasing for decades.

• In the other provinces, the rural and small town population is increasing only in areas where individuals can commute to cities or where individuals wish to retire.
Rural and Small Town Population, Canada, 1966 to 1996


Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (Cas).
Rural and Small Town Population, Manitoba, 1966 to 1996

Population (millions)

Rural and small town refers to the population outside Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and outside Census Agglomerations (CAs).
Population trends:
Rural minority in Manitoba in 1951

Rural population:
Farmer minority in rural Manitoba since 1971

- Rural non-farm
- Rural farm

Old Age Dependency Ratio:
> is highest in rural non-metro-adjacent regions
> is increasing everywhere

Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1981 to 1996. A predominantly rural region has over 50 percent of its population living in rural communities. An intermediate region has 15 to 49 percent and a predominantly urban region has less than 15 percent.
Child Dependency Ratio:
> is highest in rural northern regions
> is declining everywhere

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Predominantly rural regions</th>
<th>Intermediate regions</th>
<th>Rural metro-adjacent regions</th>
<th>Rural non-metro-adjacent regions</th>
<th>Rural northern regions</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>20.0</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Statistics Canada. Census of Population, 1981 to 1996. A predominantly rural region has over 50 percent of its population living in rural communities. An intermediate region has 15 to 49 percent and a predominantly urban region has less than 15 percent.
Health Status of Rural Canadians largely ignored
Geographic Setting

- Deterioration of health status
- Impact of place
Employment Patterns

• Lung cancer rates higher in mining areas (Pong, et al., 1999)

• Emphysema & asthma among farmers (Fair, 1992)

Unique Populations

- First Nations
- Ethnic Groups
- Women
Health Services & Health Professionals

- Fewer physicians in rural areas
- Rural and remote nursing practice – poorly studied
The Nature of Nursing Practice in Rural and Remote Canada

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     Dr. N. Stewart, U of S
     Dr. R. Pitbladlo, Laurentian

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- Government of Nunavut
- Canadian Institute for Health Information
1994 - 2000 Differences
Number of Rural RNs per 10,000 Rural Population by Census Division

% Change
5+ % Increase
Little Change
5+ % Decrease

Source: RNDB/CIHI
Rewards of Rural Nursing Practice

- Provide care to unique populations
- Contribute to rural sustainability
- Pursuit of a specific lifestyle
Challenges of Rural Nursing Practice
Broader but unclear scope
Misunderstandings and lack of understanding
Lack of Resources
Recruitment and Retention

* Satisfaction with job and community
Rural Health Research & Training
Lack of Education

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>UNBC</th>
<th>University of Manitoba</th>
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<td>Memorial University</td>
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(Minore, Kulig, Stewart, & Mack, 2001)
Less than half offered courses in rural health

- 64% of the students chose a rural health focus

- 7 of the programs indicated that their faculty conducted rural health research

(Minore, Kulig, Stewart, & Mack, 2001)
Inappropriate Policies
The Future of Rural Nursing Practice
Evidence Based Practice

• Rural nurse researchers

• Use of knowledge

• Preparing future rural nurses
New Models for Health Care Delivery

Nurse Responder

RN First Call Program

“Nurse Practitioners”
Using Technology

Telecommunications infrastructure

FNIHB Pilot Project

Telehealth
Well, I'm out in the southwest field right now, but I should be home in about an hour.

The rural professional and his cowphone

Source: Gary Larson