



Rural & Frontier Nursing in Nevada

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Nurses are required to have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to care for increasingly complex patients across a variety of settings that include acute care, primary care, tertiary care, and community care while also providing services such as case management, health promotion, and disease prevention (National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice [NACNEP], 2010). Nurses in rural areas also need additional knowledge and skills including the ability to practice autonomously in an environment that often involves close relationships and limited resources (Coyle & Narsavage, 2012). Access to healthcare in a rural environment is often challenging and signifies a gap within the current healthcare system, especially considering that one-fourth of the American population live in rural areas (Gorski, 2011). This population often has a higher percentage of uninsured individuals, qualify as medically underserved regions, experience increased poverty levels, and have limited healthcare resources (National Rural Health Association, n.d.).

Of the overall population in Nevada, 10.1% reside in rural areas, which spreads over 95,431 square miles, or 86.9% of the state's land. These rural counties have a higher older adult population resulting in greater risk of death and disability. This in turn leads to a disproportionate share of healthcare resources used by this population. Services available to the rural areas include acute care hospitals, outpatient clinics, and medical offices, and are scattered throughout rural Nevada. The average distance between hospitals within rural Nevada is 114.7 miles with the average distance between towns 46.5 miles. Traveling in winter conditions and on lonely two lane roads between towns is often daunting, and at times perilous. Traveling often takes hours, not minutes (Griswold, Packham, Etchegoyhen, & Marchand, 2015) in rural Nevada.

This identified need has led to the exciting development of a new NNA committee, the Rural and Frontier Nursing Advisory Committee. This committee focuses on the needs of rural and frontier nurses including education, resources, and programs that promote collaboration with other healthcare professionals throughout the state. We are currently creating a survey that will be sent to rural NNA members to help us identify your needs, so please be watching your mail.

References

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