Challenges in Rural/Frontier EMS

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Jim DeTienne, Supervisor

• EMS & Trauma Systems, Montana DHHS
• Montana - 4th largest state - 147,042 sq mi
  Population Density 6.8/sq mi (Wikipedia) 48th in US
  (US average = 87.4/sq mi)
Paul S. Rostykus, MD, MPH

- Jackson County (Oregon) EMS Medical Director
  20+ years in the job
- Oregon - 9th largest state - 98,381 sq mi
- Jackson County (mythical State of Jefferson)
  ~250 miles to Salem (state capitol)
  ~300 miles to Portland or Sacramento

Montana map?

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Disclosures

• None for money
• Chair, NAEMSP Rural EMS Committee

Urban vs Rural vs Frontier

• Urban
  ~80% population
  ~10% area

• Rural
  ~20% population
  ~90% area

• Multiple definitions
  Urban – Big cities & suburbs
  Rural – Small towns & farms
  Frontier – Remote & wilderness
2000 U.S. Census

Urban 79.2%
> 500/sq. mi.
• Urbanized Area
  > 50,000 – 68.6%
• Urban Cluster
  2,500 - 49,999 – 10.6%

Rural 20.8%
< 500/sq. mi.
• < 2,500

Most states have rural areas

Office of Management & Budget (OMB)

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)
• Integrated county/county > 50,000
  • Social & economic integration
  • Commuting ties
  • ~72%

Micropolitan Statistical Area (μSA)
• 10,000-49,999
  • ~10%

What - Me Worry?
(about rural & frontier EMS)

• Part of the US
  ~20% of population
  ~90% of land mass
• Natural resources
• Many urban visitors
• Ethics - Equality
Informal Survey
- EMS Medical Direction
- Funding
- Federal Leadership
- Recruitment & Retention
- Integration with Health Care System (performance & evidence based)
- Time Sensitive Disease Care (Trauma, STEMI, Stroke, Cardiac Arrest)

NASEMSO Survey

2000
- Recruitment/Retention
- Medical Oversight
- Financing
- Skill Retention
- Management Training
- Compensation
- Continuing Education
- Reimbursement
- Transport Time
- Quality Improvement

2004
- Recruitment/Retention
- Communications
- Financing
- 24/7 Coverage
- Medical Oversight
- Reimbursement
- Information Systems

Rural EMS Challenges
- Funding
- Technology – cost-effectiveness
- Volunteer EMS personnel
- Small EMS agencies
- EMS Medical Directors
- Recruitment, Retention, Compensation
- Communication
- Education
- Quality Improvement
- Urban expectations
Urban vs Rural
Larger vs Smaller
- Distances
- Mileage
- Communication
- Academia
- Infrastructure
- Staffing
- Finances
- Compensation

Rural EMS Challenges
- Medical Direction
- Systems of Care
- Quality Improvement
- EMS Leadership
- Future

Rural EMS
Medical Direction
Rural EMS Medical Direction

- Oregon EMS Forums
- Ravens

Eagles

- EMS Medical Directors for the nation's 20 - 25 largest cities
- Annual Gathering
  "... large birds of prey ... larger size, more powerful build, and heavier head and beak ..."

Ravens

- The rest of us
  "... extremely versatile and opportunistic ... remarkable feats of problem-solving ... highly intelligent ... revered as a spiritual figure or god ..."
  "Ravens are birds smart enough to earn a living on their own"

Rural EMS Systems of Care

- STEMI Creep
Rural EMS of the Future

Take Home Points
1 Rural EMS matters
2 No easy answers
3 Each situation is unique
   “If you’ve seen one EMS system, you’ve seen one EMS system”
4 Learn from each other
   Communicate

Translating us?!