

## Health Access Ills in Rural America

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Rural areas have experienced major losses in the delivery of health services over the past 20 years. Rural hospitals have closed; state of the art technology, and specialists in cardiology and oncology, and preventive wellness programs are available only in the larger hospitals that require traveling over two lane highways that are in poor repair and sometimes driving in less than optimal weather conditions. This paper addresses the health needs, particularly the health needs of rural adult and elderly women in upstate western New York. A health survey was mailed to three thousand randomly selected adult residents in Allegany County (population 48,000). Eight hundred and twenty-seven questionnaires (28% response rate) were returned. The respondents revealed that while they were generally satisfied with the health services they were receiving, there were also significant lacunae in the services available to them particularly with respect to women's issues, preventive care, and access to services. For example, many respondents (particularly as they aged) had to travel to distant cities (an hour and one-half to two hours away) to be treated for heart disease, cancer and other life-threatening and chronic ailments. These findings are examined in the context of the strategies that are employed to remedy these problems in rural communities.