Rural Health Before the Pandemic

  • 79.1 years in large metropolitan areas
  • 76.9 years in small urban towns
  • 76.7 years in rural areas

• Drivers: the opioid crisis and other “diseases of despair” ([Case and Deaton, 2015](https://www.nber.org/papers/w21145))
  • Epidemic of epidemics: overdose deaths, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, increasing HIV, abandoned children, neonatal abstinence syndrome, first responder burnout
  • Adverse childhood experiences impact mental and physical health into adulthood
  • Social Determinants of Health: housing, transportation, education, economics, access to nutritious food
Hospital Closures and Shrinking Public Health

• 161 rural hospitals closed nationwide since 2005
• 18 rural hospitals shutdown in 2019
• 2 rural hospitals closed in West Virginia since the pandemic started

• Prevention and Public Health Fund, from the CDC
  • roughly $625 million a year to state and local initiatives, such as immunizations for children, grants for local needs, and programs to respond to infectious diseases
  • Trust for America’s Health report: from 2013 to 2027 the fund will receive nearly $12 billion less than the law had promised
Bright Spots

• FQHCs serve 1 in 12 Americans nationwide, 1 in 4 West Virginians, often underserved populations
• ACA Medicaid expansion: WV with 55% reduction in uninsured rate from 2013 to 2018
• West Virginia was the last state to report COVID-19 cases, more time to prepare
• So far, the least affected state with the most at risk population (age, comorbidities) according to KFF
• COVID-19: 929 cases, 26 deaths (4/21 at 2200)
Strategies

- Screening respiratory from non-respiratory patients
- Big shift to telemedicine
- Future: Testing (molecular and serology), Tracing, Isolation/Quarantining, and hopefully treatment
- Holy Grail: Vaccine