



NATIONAL GRANGE

1616 H ST. NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20006 | PHONE (202) 628-3507 | FAX (202) 347-1091

WWW.NATIONALGRANGE.ORG | INFO@NATIONALGRANGE.ORG

American Values. Hometown Roots.

June 16, 2020

Sandra Cushman
Executive Secretary
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road, NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30329

Re. Docket No. CDC-2020-0029

Dear Ms. Cushman,

The National Grange is the oldest general farm and rural life organization in the United States. Now in its 153rd year, the Grange has worked on the local, state and national level to address the needs and concerns of its members, their friends and neighbors, and their communities. The health concerns of rural America have been and remain one of our organization's highest priorities. The impact of dealing with chronic pain is no exception.

Pain management is a very real challenge for patients, caregivers, and clinicians everywhere, but life in rural areas presents additional obstacles including a higher incidence of arthritis; a higher percentage of older adults; fewer practitioners, especially those providing specialty care; the need for patients to travel longer distances to get care; the closing of many rural medical facilities; and limitations to broadband access which restricts the use of telemedicine options. We believe that every discussion involving rural health must first begin with acknowledgement that rural Americans face these disparities.

The statistics relating to access to care are startling:

¹Percentage of Americans living in rural areas: 20%

²Percentage of physicians practicing in rural areas: 12%

Percentage of specialists practicing in rural areas: 8%

¹ <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/rural-america.html>

² American Society on Aging
<https://www.asaging.org/blog/rural-america-faces-shortage-physicians-care-rapidly-aging-population>

³Primary Care Physicians per 100K urban dwellers: 53.3

Primary Care Physicians per 100K rural dwellers: 39.8

Specialty care physicians per 100K urban dwellers: 263

Specialty care physicians per 100K rural dwellers: 30

Another aspect of our concern is that rural America has tragically and devastatingly been affected by the opioid crisis. Identifying and supporting effective ways to address it is a health imperative. In that regard, it is important to keep in mind some data from the 2016 CDC National Health Interview Survey. It found that 24% of rural adults suffered from chronic pain (18% in urban areas). Rural America clearly has an exceptionally high percentage of adults suffering from chronic pain and a great shortage of health care clinicians, particularly specialists including those who deal with pain and addiction. We see this nexus as one of the causative factors that must be addressed. There is such a need for new therapies, new medicines, access to care through telemedicine and other innovations that can deal effectively and safely with the issue of chronic pain. Special attention should also be given to understanding why a greater percentage of rural adults experience this serious condition.

We appreciate the opportunity to express our interest and concern and our willingness to work with educational and research institutions, government agencies, non-profit groups and rural Americans to finding new solutions.

Respectively Submitted,



Betsy Huber

President

National Grange

³ National Rural Health Association

<https://www.ruralhealthweb.org/about-nrha/about-rural-health-care>