

The Higher Risk of Death from Five leading Causes for Rural Americans

Hi. This is Dr. Sonya Hardin in the College of Nursing at East Carolina University. Today I'd like to talk about rural Americans being at higher risk of death from five leading causes. According to the CDC, Americans living in rural areas are more likely to die from leading causes than their urban counterparts. In 2014 many deaths among rural Americans were potentially preventable including 25,000 from heart disease, 19,000 from cancer, 12,000 from unintentional injuries, 11,000 from chronic lower-respiratory disease and 4,000 from stroke. The percentages of deaths that were potentially preventable were higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

Recent studies have shown that residents of rural areas in the United States tend to be older and sicker than their urban counterparts. They have higher rates of cigarette smoking, high blood pressure and obesity. Rural residents report less leisure time, physical activity, and lower seatbelt use than their urban counterparts. They also have higher rates of poverty, less access to healthcare and are less likely to have health insurance. We know that there are gaps in healthcare that, as healthcare providers, we can address.

The first is screening patients for high blood pressure and help them control with a set goal. High blood pressure is a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke. We need to increase cancer prevention and early detection. As rural healthcare providers, we should participate in the state-level comprehensive control coalitions. Comprehensive cancer control programs focus on cancer prevention, education,

We should encourage physical activity and healthy eating to reduce obesity. Obesity has been linked to a variety of serious chronic illnesses, including diabetes, heart disease, cancer and arthritis. We should also promote smoking cessation. Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States and is the most significant risk factor of chronic lower-respiratory disease.

We need to promote motor vehicle safety. Rural healthcare providers should encourage patients to wear a seatbelt and counsel parents and childcare providers to use age and size-appropriate car seats, booster seats, and seatbelts on every trip. Lastly, we all need to engage in safer prescribing of opioids for pain. Healthcare providers should follow the CDC guidelines when prescribing opioids for chronic pain and educate patients on the risk and benefits of opioids and using non-pharmacologic therapies to provide greater benefits.

This summarizes the high risk of death from the five leading causes with rural Americans. Thank you. This is Dr. Sonya Hardin in the College of Nursing at East Carolina University.