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# Georgia Southern Examines Rural Hospital Closures

June 24, 2016



Critical access hospitals provide several essential services to local communities. Along with the functions associated with providing necessary medical care, they also offer employment opportunities and other economic benefits to the communities they serve. Since 2010, the number of rural hospital closures has steadily increased. The common-good approach to ethical decision-making provides a framework that aids in evaluation of the effects that hospital closures have on rural residents and communities.

This analysis includes results of a systematic overview of peer-reviewed literature to address the following research questions: 1) How have state policies and the adoption of Medicaid expansion influenced the viability of rural hospitals? 2) What are the ethical implications of Medicaid expansion and state policy reform/adoption pertaining to viability of rural hospitals? and 3) What are the ethical implications of critical access hospital closures on rural communities in Georgia? Information related to these questions is

presented, along with tactics to addressing these in an ethical manner.

This descriptive analysis shows that the largest number of state-specific closures have occurred in states with a federal exchange and which chose not to expand Medicaid. Characteristics of the state of Georgia and the counties with recent closures show that these counties typically have smaller populations with a high minority presence, lower education and income levels, and higher numbers of medically uninsured.

The common-good approach to ethical decision-making is suitable for evaluating the ethical implications of policy-level decisions impacting the closure of critical access hospitals serving the rural communities of Georgia.

“[Georgia’s rural hospital closures: The common-good approach to ethical decision-making](#),” was published in the Journal of the Georgia Public Health Association.

Dr. William A. Mase, Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Management at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Georgia Southern University (JPHCOPH) was the faculty mentor and co-author. JPHCOPH DrPH students, Ms. Randi G. Bastian, Mr. Marcus Garner, Mr. John S. Barron, and Mr. Emmanuel A. Akowuah took the lead on this research.

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