

## Albuquerque Attestation on the Future of Rural Family Medicine in the United States



We the delegates of the 16<sup>th</sup> WONCA World Rural Health Conference held October 12-15, 2019 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, United States state the following:

The WONCA Working Party on Rural Practice, the American Academy of Family Physicians and the National Rural Health Association seek to help determine how to deliver care in rural areas in a sustainable manner and how rural health care may change in the future to ensure that it is accessible, high quality, and economically value-based.

This includes ensuring that rural communities have access to maternity, emergency, and primary care services across generations. All of these services can be provided by well-trained family doctors. Even in poorly resourced communities, a core group of family doctors can provide much of the care found in tertiary care hospitals, especially in conjunction with technologic and system advances. While telemedicine can serve as a tool for rural workforce effectiveness, it cannot replace the hands-on skills of the family doctor.

Every community should have a plan for addressing obstetric, pediatric, and traumatic emergencies, though the details will vary significantly based on factors such as the distance to tertiary care, weather, and community capabilities.

Rural communities are heterogeneous and their needs vary community to community. Therefore, it is necessary to study rural communities through a lens that allows differentiation of needs from one location to another due to local population needs, documented disparities, age of the population, and availability of technology and human resources. Factors important to consider are distances to nearest hospitals, transportation options, availability of community services, and the community's infrastructure including the quality of the roads and availability of communication, especially internet access.

Well-prepared family doctors are able to provide substantial contributions to the teams of providers serving rural populations. The concept of rural generalism speaks to the need for community oriented primary care in rural areas to extend to critical services not as often required in less remote or higher resourced circumstances. Recognizing this and the continued workforce needs particular to rural areas, policies must support recruitment of family physicians to rural areas by increasing student choice of family medicine while also increasing family medicine training programs and specifically, the support of programs preparing physicians to remain in rural areas by training in rural areas.

As a result of the 16<sup>th</sup> WONCA World Rural Health Conference, it is our intention to have increasing momentum to create policy, collaborate more fully and substantiate resources to help family doctors improve health disparities found in rural and remote communities.