

# Rural Nursing as a Specialty

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## Introduction

- Rural nurses: 16% of the total Registered Nurse (RN) workforce, nearing retirement, less likely to have a bachelor's degree, and less likely to work in a hospital (Rural Health Information Hub, 2022).
- Leaders reached out to system nursing research team to investigate strategies for better understanding of retention, recruitment in rural areas

## Objectives

1. Identify themes around rural nursing and intention to leave/turnover
2. Increase awareness for healthcare leaders of rural facilities' unique needs and role in increasing access to quality care in rural communities

## Methods

- Semi-structured interviews and focus groups of staff, clinical leaders
- Interviews at 8 rural hospitals and 1 critical access community hospital across 3 states
- Qualitative Analysis with member checking



The rural setting  
requires nurses to be  
deeply intertwined  
with the inner workings  
of their community.

## Results

### Identified themes:

1. The specialty of Rural Nursing
2. Interdependence with the Community
3. Creativity and Innovation as a Necessity
4. Uniquely Comprehensive Clinical Knowledge & Skills Across Specialties

## Discussion

- The community is central to bringing in and retaining nurses in rural hospitals: family connection, spousal ties, etc.
- Extensive training and ongoing education creates distinct challenges for rural leaders and staff
- Need for expert rural nurses increasing – will require unique recruitment and well-being strategies
- Ongoing work to be done – more in-depth interviews

