

Rural Primary Care: Examining Rural Provider Knowledge Regarding Accountable and Value-Based Care

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Introduction. For rural communities, access to quality healthcare continues to be a significant challenge due to a variety of barriers, including limited facilities and socioeconomic factors. Organizations like Value-Based Care (VBC) models and Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) could offer solutions. This study examines rural providers' demographics, practice backgrounds, and thoughts regarding ACOs and VBC.

Methods. A cross-sectional survey assessed rural Kansas healthcare providers' opinions and knowledge of ACOs and VBC. KUMC students in the Summer Training Option in Rural Medicine distributed the survey via a secure REDCap[®] database, collecting data on gender, race, years in practice, and community size.

Results. Fifty-eight providers participated with the majority of participants being physicians and others being physician assistants and nurse practitioners. While most were aware of ACOs, very few reported feeling knowledgeable. Most providers have heard of VBC, but only 8.6% reported being very familiar. ACO participation was low with the majority (56.25%) having only been involved for two to five years. Thoughts on effectiveness varied. 30% believed ACOs improve healthcare quality, while the majority were neutral. Similarly, only 36.4% viewed ACOs as slightly effective in cost control. Regarding VBC, less than half agreed it enhances outcomes, while others remained neutral.

Conclusions. While rural providers are aware of ACO and VBCs, many continue to have unanswered questions and hesitations. Low participation rates suggest barriers to engagement, while many remain neutral due to a lack of proper education. Closing these gaps may help rural communities embrace these models more widely.