

EMS Perspectives of Community Paramedicine in Rural Kansas: A Cross-Sectional Survey

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Introduction. Community Paramedicine (CP) is an evolving model of care designed to improve access to healthcare, particularly in rural communities where disparities are pronounced. However, the perspectives of Kansas Emergency Medical Services (EMS) professionals regarding CP have not been previously studied. Authors of this study aimed to inform CP implementation in Kansas.

Methods. A cross-sectional survey was administered to EMS professionals in rural Kansas communities with clinical sites affiliated with the Summer Training Option in Rural Medicine (STORM), including EMS and fire departments across 19 communities. The survey included Likert-scale and open-ended questions assessing EMS professionals' understanding and perceptions of CP.

Results. The study yielded 59 completed surveys and 9 incomplete surveys. Across all certification levels, respondents reported the highest confidence in assessment skills and the lowest confidence in referral activities. Paramedics and Advanced EMTs reported at least moderate confidence across more skill areas than EMTs. Reported concerns that may discourage CP certification included training and certification requirements, limited interest, funding and staffing constraints, perceived mismatch with the EMS mission, workload and age, liability, compensation, patient education, and organizational culture and morale. Most respondents (86%) believed that implementing CP would at least moderately improve healthcare access in their communities.

Conclusions. EMS professionals reported confidence in many skills relevant to CP, suggesting that a CP scope of practice may align with existing EMS competencies, potentially minimizing the need for substantial additional training. Targeted education in prevention, public health, and referral skills may strengthen CP programs. Ensuring fair compensation, accessible training opportunities, and financial support for CP program development will be critical to successful implementation.