Suicide rates climbing, especially in rural America
County-by-county analysis offers clues about elevated risk

The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

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CG: Danielle Steelesmith, PhD **Ohio State Wexner Medical Center**	Steelesmith says rates mirrored deprivation in rural areas: *"In rural areas, specifically, if the area had higher depravation, so less economic opportunity, there were higher suicide rates than a rural county that had a lower level of depravation." :13* Steelesmith says gun shops increased rates in urban areas: *"In more urban areas, locations that had a large number of gun shops had higher suicide rates than a similar urban area that just had fewer gun shops available." :10* Steelesmith explains why rates are higher among the uninsured: *"The higher the uninsured population, the higher the suicide rate, and that is potentially because people who are not insured aren't able to access care. It's more expensive, they can't afford it; whereas those who have insurance can at least get part of that covered, whether it's to see a mental health or even a primary care provider." :19* Steelesmith says deprivation is the biggest factor in rural suicides: *"The main factor to make rural suicide rates higher than urban areas was depravation. So the lack of economic opportunity, lower education, those factors are what really have a big impact in rural counties." :14* Steelesmith says assistance programs may reduce suicide rates: *"In rural areas, to potentially reduce the suicide rate, I think education opportunities, employment opportunities would be good. Programs to initiate and to help reduce that and alleviate some of the stress that comes from low income." :18*

CG: Danielle Steelesmith, PhD **Ohio State Wexner Medical Center**	Steelesmith suggests ways to improve access to care: *"How to seek help, where to seek help, expanding the tele, telemedicine, telehealth, would also bring access to mental health, and even healthcare, to a lot of rural residents, that could help reduce suicide rates." :16*
	Fontanella says deprivation increased rates in rural areas: *"We found that rates of suicide in rural areas were higher than in urban areas, and we found that social deprivation was poverty, low income, unemployment was associated with suicide." :18*
	Fontanella says rates are higher in rural areas than in urban: *"The rate of suicide has increased by 30% over the past decade, and it's increasing more in rural areas than in urban areas, and the disparity is increasing over time." :14*
CG: Cynthia Fontanella, PhD **Ohio State Wexner Medical Center**	Fontanella lists challenges to accessing care in rural areas: *"They have to travel longer distances, deal with waiting lists. Rural residents tend to also have lower incomes, less likely to have insurance compared to urban residents. So, this all plays a role in less as access to mental health services." :20*
	Fontanella says educating primary care physicians can help: *"Educating primary care physicians about mental health diagnosis, depression and suicide can be really effective, because primary care physicians are the first front line workers that residents tend to go to, because there's also less specialty care in rural areas." :22*
	Fontanella says healthcare coverage is a long-term goal: *"Improving healthcare coverage is a long term goal, because a lot of rural residents are uninsured. We found that being uninsured is a big risk factor for suicide." :12*
	Fontanella says social isolation can lead to depression: *"We know that living in a rural area you tend to be more isolated geographically, and you're not close to neighbors, and so you don't see a lot of people. You don't have a lot of one-on-one contact, which increases the rates of depression." :19*

References

[1]*Contextual Factors Associated With County-Level Suicide Rates in the United States, 1999 to 2016*, **JAMA Network Open, Volume 2, Issue 9, Sept. 6, 2019**. Online: https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2749451?utm_source=For_The_Media&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=ftm_links&utm_term=090619

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