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### **“Rural Dermatology in Louisiana”**

**BACKGROUND:** Access to healthcare is not a unique problem to rural areas, but it is especially prevalent in reference to dermatology. There are many factors that influence a dermatologist’s decision whether to practice in rural vs urban areas, and it is far more common to choose the latter. For example, it has been shown that medical school graduates from public medical schools or rural tracks are more likely to practice in rural areas. Additionally, it is becoming increasingly common for dermatologists to practice in group practices; therefore, running a solo, rural practice presents its own challenges.

To adequately provide dermatologic care for a community, it is estimated that 4 dermatologists per 100,000 individuals are needed. The current US average is about 3.4 dermatologists per 100,000 individuals, and urban areas have 40 times the concentration of dermatologists per 100,000 citizens in rural areas.

**OBJECTIVES:** The objective of this study is to analyze the distribution of dermatologists throughout the state of Louisiana, the factors that influence this distribution, and the distribution of LSU Dermatology graduates.

**METHODS:** The Area Health Resource File was used to gather data regarding distribution of dermatologists throughout Louisiana. A list of LSU Dermatology graduates from 2006-2023 was evaluated. Graduates’ hometowns and current practice locations were used to calculate the percentage of graduates who returned home, are from rural areas, and currently practice in rural areas.

**RESULTS:** Dermatologists in Louisiana practice in 26/64 parishes with most dermatologists practicing in Orleans and Jefferson parishes. Of LSU Dermatology graduates between 2006-2023, 57.4% returned to their hometowns to practice, 14.5% were from rural areas (5/9 returned to their home rural area to practice), and 5.9% of graduates currently practice in rural areas.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Most of the dermatologists in the state practice in the urban areas (specifically the greater New Orleans area). This can be attributed to many factors: the two Louisiana dermatology residencies are localized to New Orleans, more opportunities to join group practices in urban areas, etc. Further studies can be done to identify influencing factors as these are not well defined in the literature.