

Rural Dermatology in Louisiana

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Introduction

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.

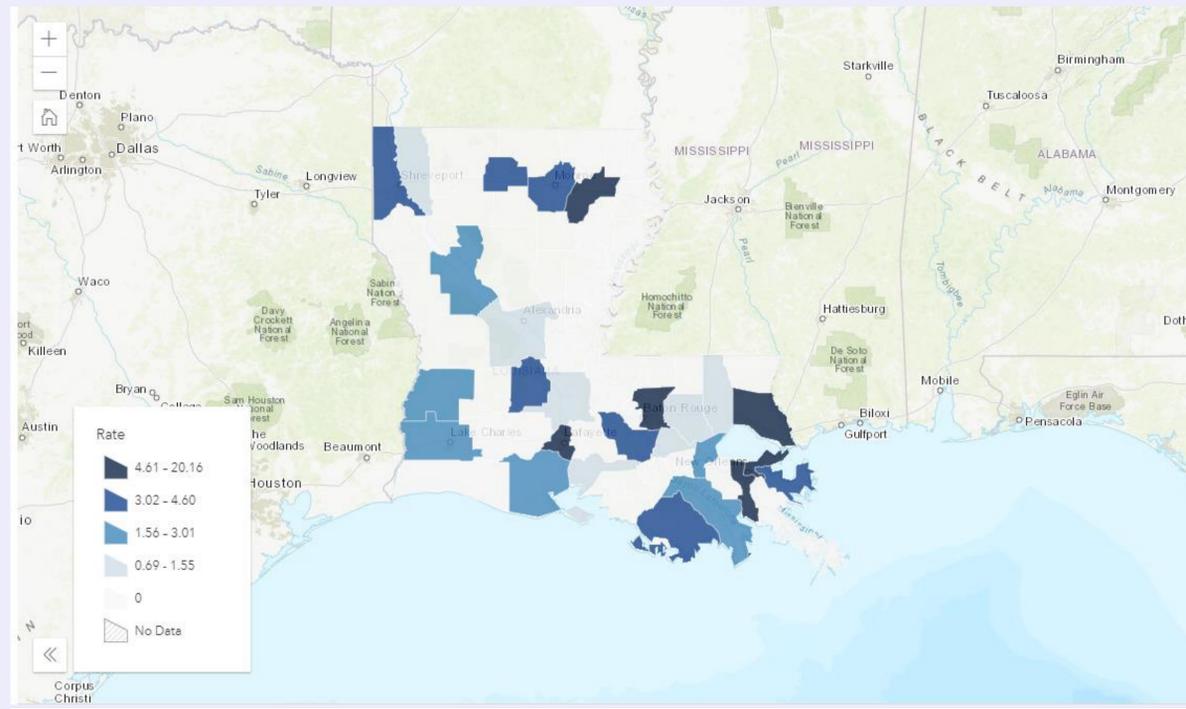
To adequately provide dermatologic care for a community, it is estimated that 4 dermatologists per 100,000 individuals are needed. The current US average is about 3.4 dermatologists per 100,000 individuals, and urban areas have 40 times the concentration of dermatologists per 100,000 citizens in rural 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 2021-2022 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



Parish	Rate (per 100,000 population)
Ascension	0.78
Beauregard	2.73
Bossier	0.77
Caddo	4.29
Calcasieu	2.92
East Baton Rouge	7.06
Evangeline	3.10
Iberia	1.45
Iberville	3.35
Jefferson	10.61
Lafayette	4.91
Lafourche	2.05
Lincoln	4.15
Livingston	0.69
Natchitoches	2.70
Orleans	20.16
Ouachita	3.78
Rapides	1.55
Richland	5.05
St. Bernard	4.52
St. John the Baptist	2.38
St. Landry	1.22
St. Tammany	8.17
Tangipahoa	0.74
Terrebonne	4.60
Vermillion	1.75

Fig 1. Rate of Dermatologists per 100,000 population by parish. A map of the state showing the rates per parish is included along with the specifics rates of parishes that have practicing dermatologists.

LSU Dermatology Alumni	
Returned to hometown	57.4%
Graduates from rural areas	14.5% (5/9 returned to their home rural area to practice)
Currently practicing in rural areas	5.9%

Fig 2. Distribution of LSU Dermatology alumni. Distribution of LSU Dermatology alumni from 2006-2023.

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.

Next Steps

Further studies can be done to identify influencing factors as these are not well defined in the literature. Further analysis of similar statistics of distribution of dermatologists and practice locations of dermatology graduates across other southeastern states may shine light on common trends and factors influencing where dermatologists choose to practice.

References

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