

Allied health professionals-to-population ratio 15 times higher in urban centres than in remote communities

Neeru Gupta. "Allied health professionals-to-population ratio 15 times higher in urban centres than in remote communities."
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Context

Health workforces around the world are characterized with geographic maldistribution, often leading to inequalities in rural health outcomes. Few rural health workforce studies focus on allied health professionals, include urban comparators, integrate gender considerations, or measure rural diversity. While pharmacists residing in more rural and remote communities earned 9% more than those in core urban centres, relative remoteness contributed little to wage differentials among dentists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, or other allied health professionals (AHPs) in therapy and assessment. Women earned significantly less than men in dentistry, pharmacy, and physical or occupational therapy, after adjusting for remoteness and other characteristics.

Key finding(s) from the research

This national observational study found that the density of AHPs was 15 times higher in more urbanized and accessible parts of Canada in 2016 compared with the most rural and remote areas, a pattern which had changed little since 2006.

Population(s) studied: Allied health professionals in Canada

Research dataset(s) used: 2016 Canadian Population Census, 2006 Canadian Population Census, Index of Remoteness

Policy implications for this research

Monetary incentives are frequently raised as a policy option to bolster recruitment of healthcare practitioners to rural and underserved communities; however, this investigation did not find consistent wage disparities by relative remoteness as characterizing allied health professions in Canada. The evidence base to support financial incentives to AHPs to reduce perceived opportunity costs associated with working and living in rural and underserved areas remains limited.

Policy area(s) this research can inform: Health; Labour; Population and demography

Read the full article

Gupta, N., Gulliver, A. & Singh, P. (2023). "Relative remoteness and wage differentials in the Canadian allied health professional workforce." *Rural and Remote Health*, 23:7882. <https://doi.org/10.22605/RRH7882>