Honored to be asked to speak to you.
I am a rural physician in a very small poor county in middle Georgia. I live and practice in Wrightsville, Georgia. Herschel Walker is from Wrightsville. I spent several years as the only physician in my county and I am still the only doctor who lives in the county.
I love my job and believe that the best medicine can be practiced in rural areas because of the ability to know patients so well. I understand that it is NOT the type of practice most physicians choose. One thing I understand is ACCESS to care and have spent the last 25 years of my life trying to establish basics health services in my

I believe that the best job you can have is being a small town physician. I believe that the best medicine can be practice in any rural community and sometimes we are better because of the relationship you develop with your patients and the continuity of care that can be achieved. So why is rural health such a challenging area. Why are there so many underserved counties and communities and why are there so few people willing to practice in those area….Well Atlanta we have some problems. This gentleman and his wife live in rural Jefferson County, It is patients like these folks that make life for rural physicians so special. He is 101 ½. He works all day every day except Sunday. When I asked his what advice he gives young people he said quit talking about what your problems are and starting working to solve them. Good advice all. Many of you have devoted your lives to addressing issues of rural health.

The number of American medical students going into primary care has dropped by more than 50% since 1997

This is my grandfather. Dr. N.J. Newsom. If you pass through Sandersville on Hwy !5 look above West Drug company Office upstairs . EMORY / Blue Medicine/ Routinely swapped patients with the Mayo brothers in Rochestor Minnesota/ Last week I listened as an important academic physician said he could not imagine why a medical school would put an emphasis on primary care. That no one wanted to do that because you could no longer make a living.

## Rural Health

**More Primary Care:**

- Better health outcomes
- Lower all cause mortality
- Lower mortality for heart disease, cancer and stroke
- Lower infant mortality
- Fewer low birth weight infants
- Less self reported poor health and longer life

Truth is our state cannot afford to not have a strong primary care workforce. It keeps us healthy. This is after controlling for all variables including age, education, income, employment, pollution, lifestyle and health insurance.

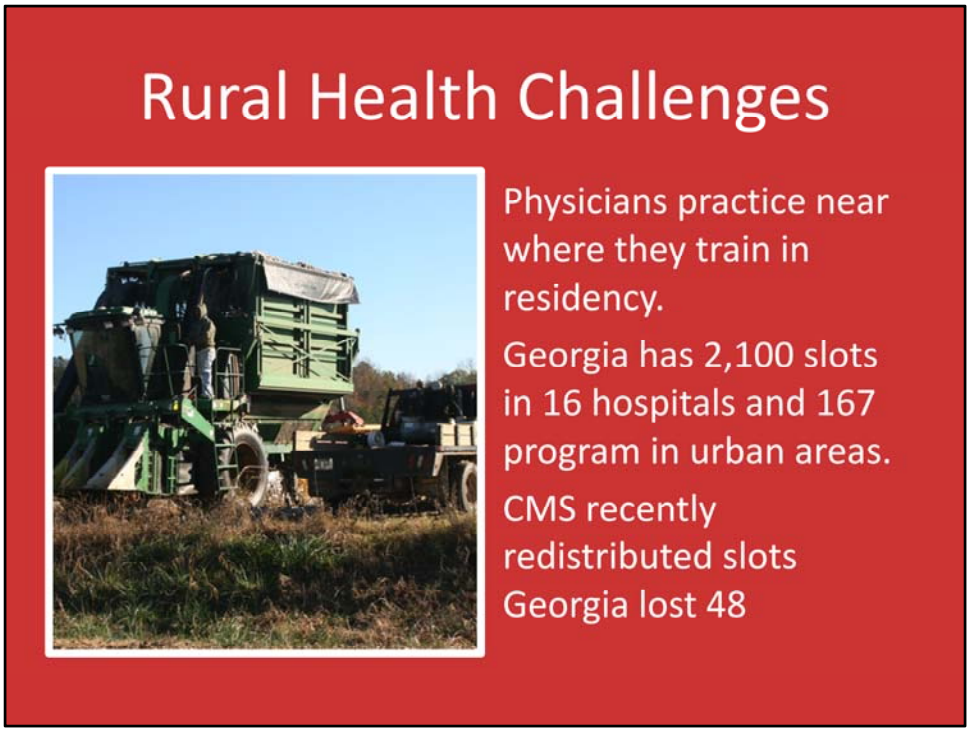
This has been demonstrated in multiple studies over many years.
Surprisingly with an excess of speciality physicians increased mortality

Most importantly when rural areas had adequate numbers of PCP the effects note were even more robust

With adequate primary care physicians there is a linear decrease in spending and increased quality of care.

In contrast, more specialists result in higher costs and poorer quality of care.
Bauer Chaundra 2004

Often our prejudices are to see the most specialized physician we can see….one of our own choosing perhaps
Best done after a through evaluation and discussion with a PCP




Another challenge: Georgia was # 12 on the list and slots were awarded to 1 thru 10. TWO important criteria in the decision by CMS whether or not the slot would be used in a program with a rural training track and whether residents were centering on primary care. Board of Regents August of this year established a goal of increasing slots by 400.

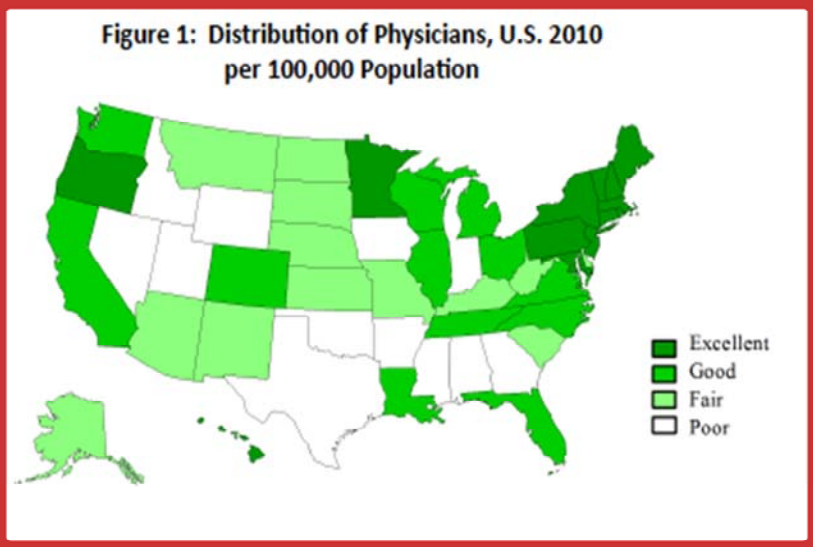
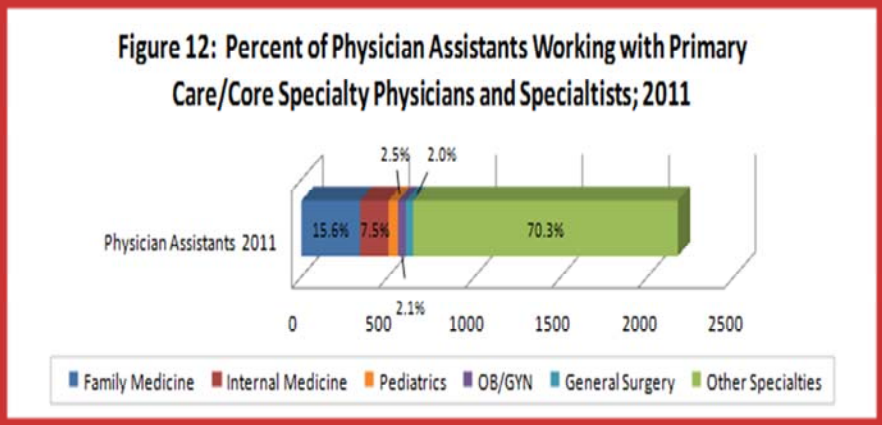


Figure 1: Distribution of Physicians, U.S. 2010
per 100,000 Population
Excellent
Good
Fair
Poor

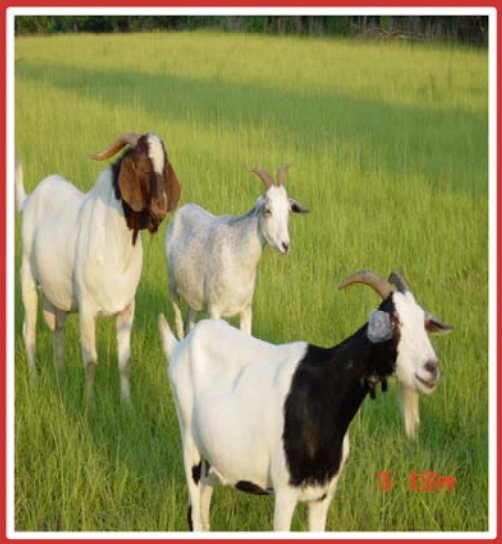



# SPECIALTY DISTRIBUTION OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS IN GEORGIA

GEORGIA BOARD OF PHYSICIAN WORKFORCE 2013

# Rural Health Challenges

Primary Care
Distribution
Prejudice
Skill Set
Liability
Primary Source Data



## Rural Health Solutions

Physicians Council/Mentors

Strategic Plan

Liability Protection

Telemedicine

## Rural Health Solutions

Become a quality Primary Care State

Educate consumers

Value those who serve in rural Georgia

Challenge our state institutions to train physicians with unique skill sets needed

Story @ listening to patients.