

- **Title**
 - What are new medical graduates evaluating when they are choosing their first job? A qualitative study to improve recruitment to rural Appalachia
- **Background**
 - In the United States, the rural Appalachian region continues to experience some of the worst access to care disparities in the country, coupled with some of the greatest health needs. Although recruitment providers to rural areas has remained a policy focus, there has been a continued contraction of the rural health workforce. Better understanding the current generation's (Generation Z) preferences for a job is needed so that effective policies can be designed to bolster rural recruitment.
- **Objectives**
 - (1) Identify job preferences of resident physicians, physician assistant (PA) students and nurse practitioner (NP) students, (2) elicit the conditions that would need to be met to choose a job in rural Appalachia, and (3) better understand complex evaluation of multilevel factors these trainees evaluate when choosing a job.
- **Methods/Design**
 - We conducted a qualitative study using purposive sampling; we recruited final year medical residents, PA students, and NP students in 2024. Participants completed individual, semi-structured interviews over the phone by a member of QPRO. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.
- **Results**
 - We completed interviews with 22 individuals, including medical residents (n=6), PA (n=14), and NP students (n=2). The sample represented six universities in 4 states. The findings indicate that participants evaluated having a supportive team with a cohesive environment, the medical specialty/subspecialty of the position, with having average/adequate salary. Respondents reported that for them to choose a job in a rural area, the salary should be slightly higher than in an urban area, the reputation of the healthcare system and culture was important, and they did not want to be further than 30-45 minutes away from a more urban area. Team dynamics, feeling a sense of community, and being raised in a rural area were the most important job-, community- and personal-level factors evaluated when choosing a job.
- **Conclusions**
 - This study provides a framework on how new graduates evaluate jobs. Efforts to improve recruitment to rural areas include a focus on the culture of organizations and the system's reputation. In contrast to our expectations, salary was not listed as a very important factor when selecting jobs for new medical trainees.
- **Authors and affiliations**
 - Chris Gillette, PhD*
 - Aylin Aguilar, BA
 - Sarah Garvick, MS, MPAS, PA-C
 - Chris Everett, PhD, PA-C

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- Dawn Caviness, MD
- Esita Patel, PhD, RN
- Jan Ostermann, PhD-senior