

Recruitment and Retention for the UW-Madison Physician Assistant Program

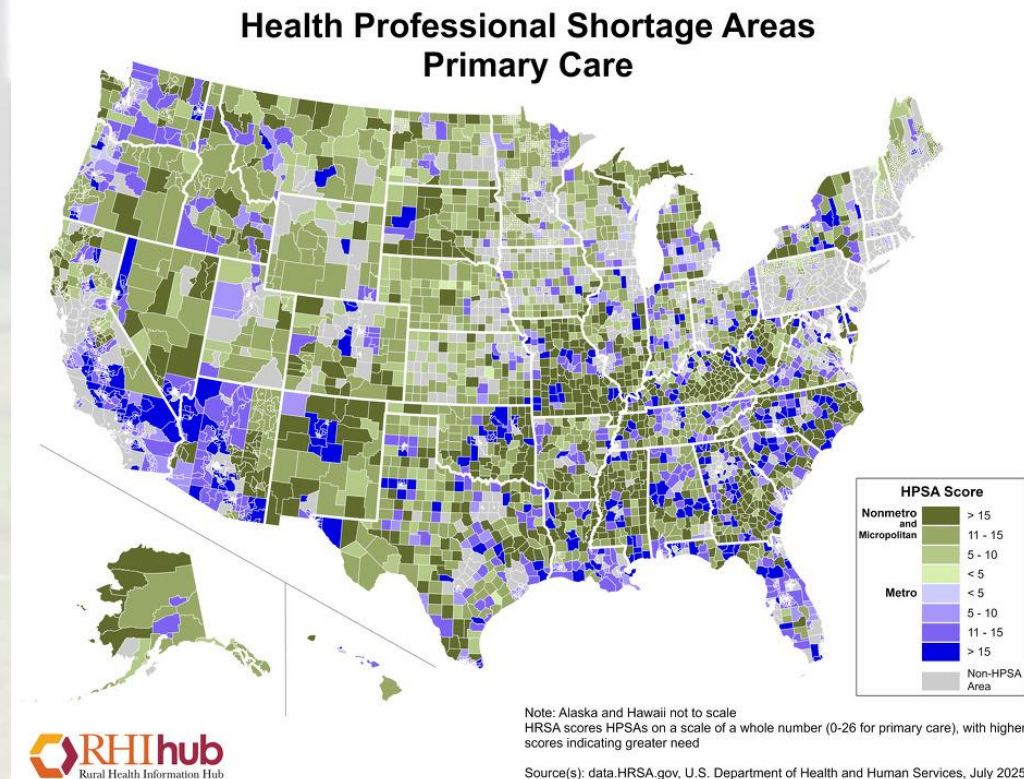
Joel Hill, PA-C, Amy Zangl, PA-C Leslie Washatko, PA-C

Objectives

- Identify factors that improve recruitment and retention rates for health care facilities in rural and underserved settings
- Analyze workforce recruitment strategies that strengthen postgraduate retention rates
- Examine recruitment and retention results for UW-Madison physician assistant distance education graduates

Rurality in the U.S.

- Approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population lives in rural areas.
- One contributing factor to poorer health outcomes among rural residents vs urban residents is access to health care.
- Rural residents face several barriers in accessing care, including transportation challenges, longer distances, facility closures, higher rates of residents without insurance, and more limited access to broadband internet and other telehealth capabilities

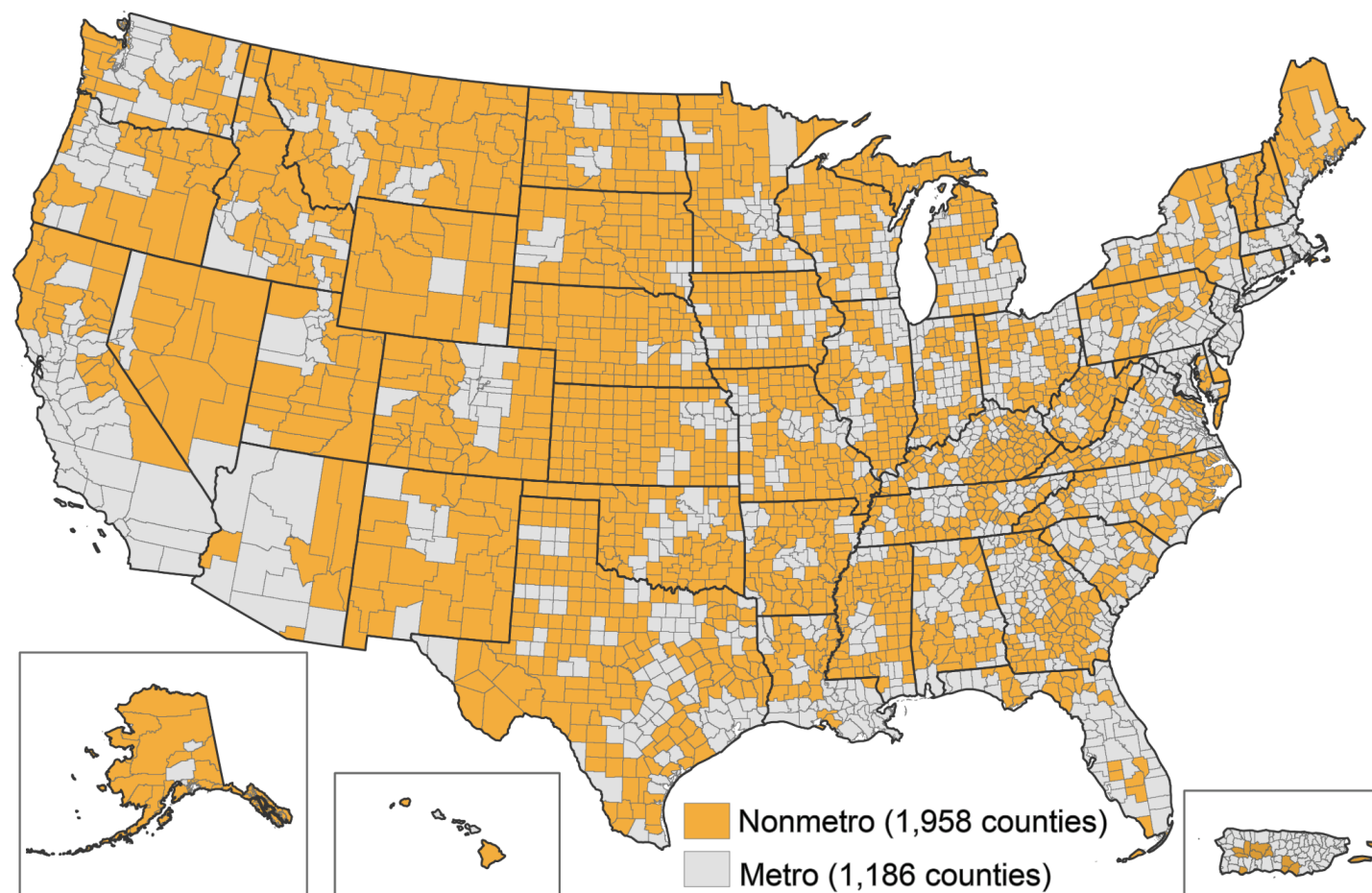


What is Rural?

- Numerous definitions of rurality
 - Rural areas comprise open country and settlements with fewer than 2,000 housing units and 5,000 residents.
 - [Rural Health Information hub](#)
 - [Am I Rural - Tool](#)



Metropolitan (metro) and nonmetropolitan (nonmetro) counties, 2023

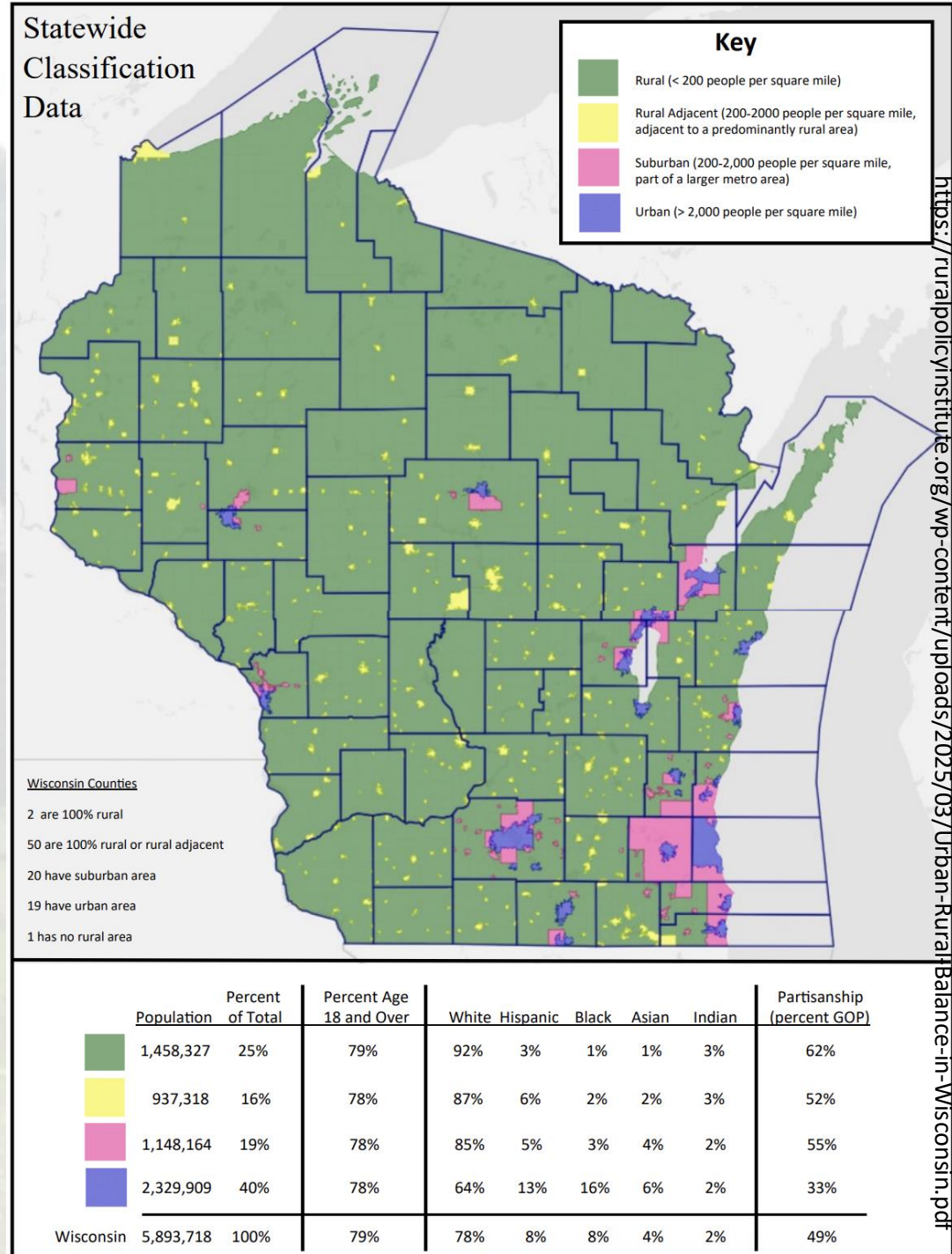
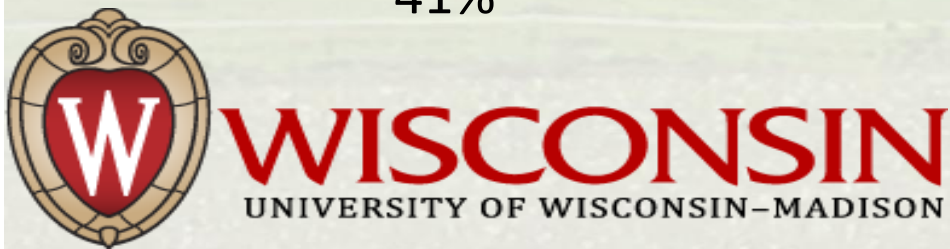


Note: Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico are not drawn to scale. Metro/nonmetro delineations are not available for other U.S. island territories.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Office of Management and Budget and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

Rurality in Wisconsin

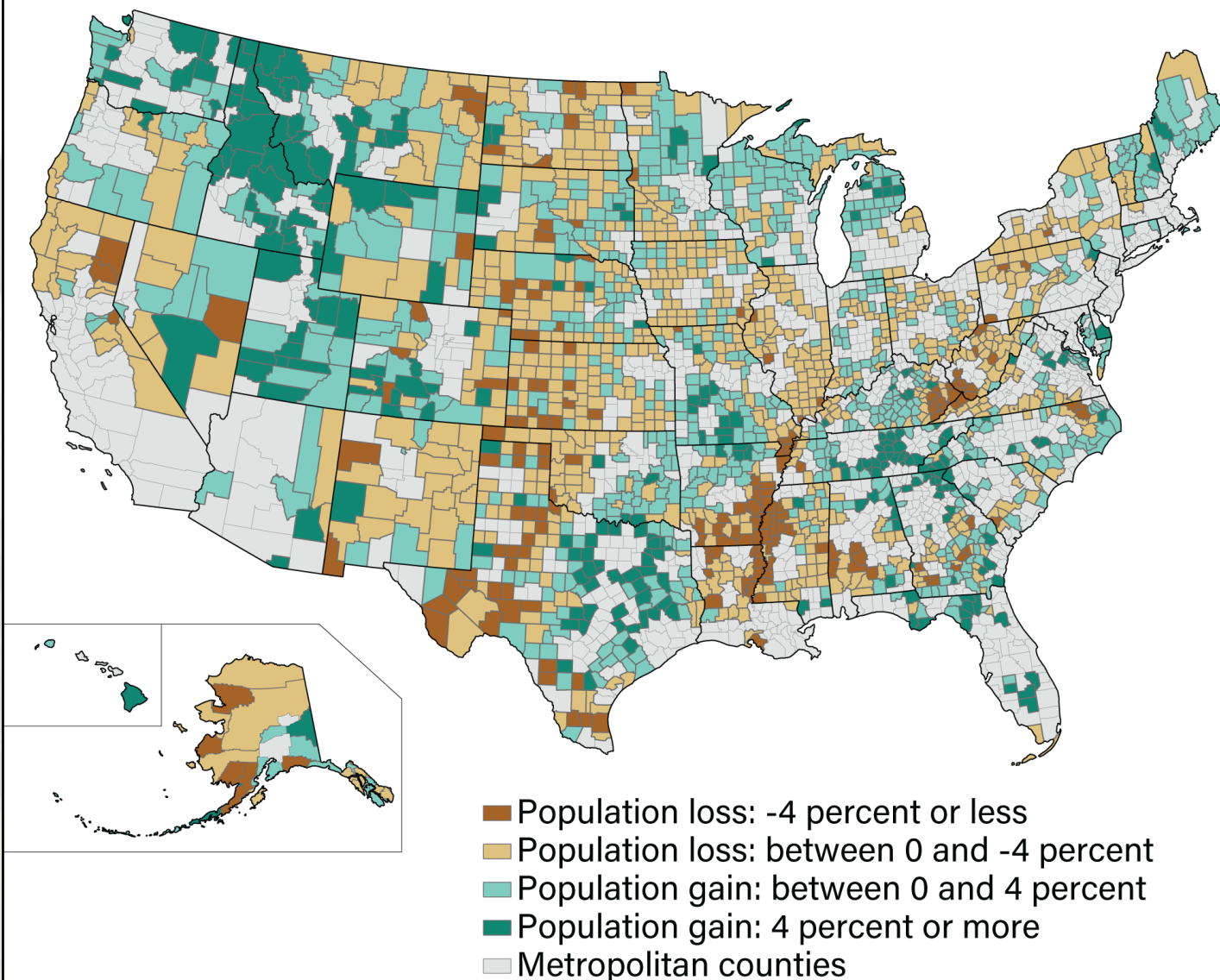
- No single community type contains a majority of WI residents
 - Urban municipalities = 40%
 - Suburban municipalities = 19%
 - Rural municipalities = 25%
 - “*Rural Adjacent*” municipalities – 16%
 - Rural adjacent is a moderately dense rural community
 - Rural and rural adjacent communities = 41%



Rural Changes

- Nonmetro population increase since 2020
- 2020-21: nonmetro in-migration 92% domestic
- 2021-24: nonmetro domestic in-migration ↓, nonmetro international migration ↑ (about ½ of all nonmetro in-migration)

Rate of population change in nonmetropolitan counties, 2020-2024



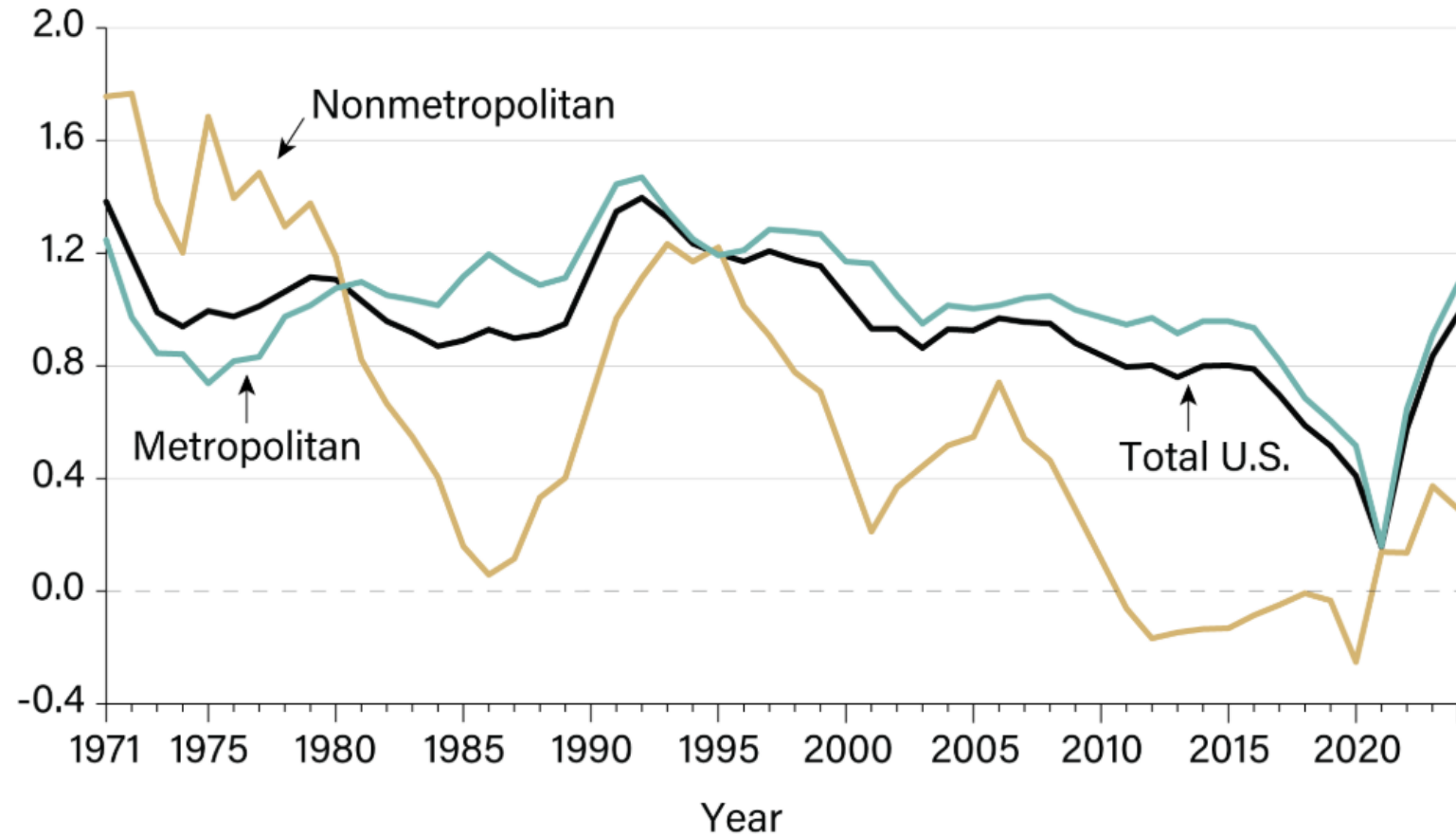
Note: Shows the percent change in the U.S. population from July 2020 to June 2024.
Source: USDA Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census Population Estimates Program, 2024.

Rural Changes

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Population change in aggregate and by metropolitan/nonmetropolitan status, 1971-2024

Percent change from previous year



Note: Metropolitan classification definitions vary. For 1971-80, the 1974 metropolitan definition was used; for 1981-90, 1983 metropolitan definition was used; for 1991-2000, 1993 definition was used; for 2001-10, 2003 definition was used; for 2011-24, 2023 definition was used.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Estimates Program.

Recruitment/Retention Rural Challenges

Recruitment

- Focuses on attracting current health professionals and students to open positions or to future positions.
 - Competitive compensation/benefits
 - Loan repayment
 - Rural tracks
 - Rural-Origin recruitment
 - Rural facility partnerships

Retention

- Focuses on keeping healthcare professionals employed in their healthcare facilities and communities.
 - Work-Life balance
 - Rural-Origin recruitment
 - Rural residency/fellowships
 - Provide positive rural exposures
 - Adopt mission to train rural clinicians

Recruitment/Retention Rural Challenges

Recruitment

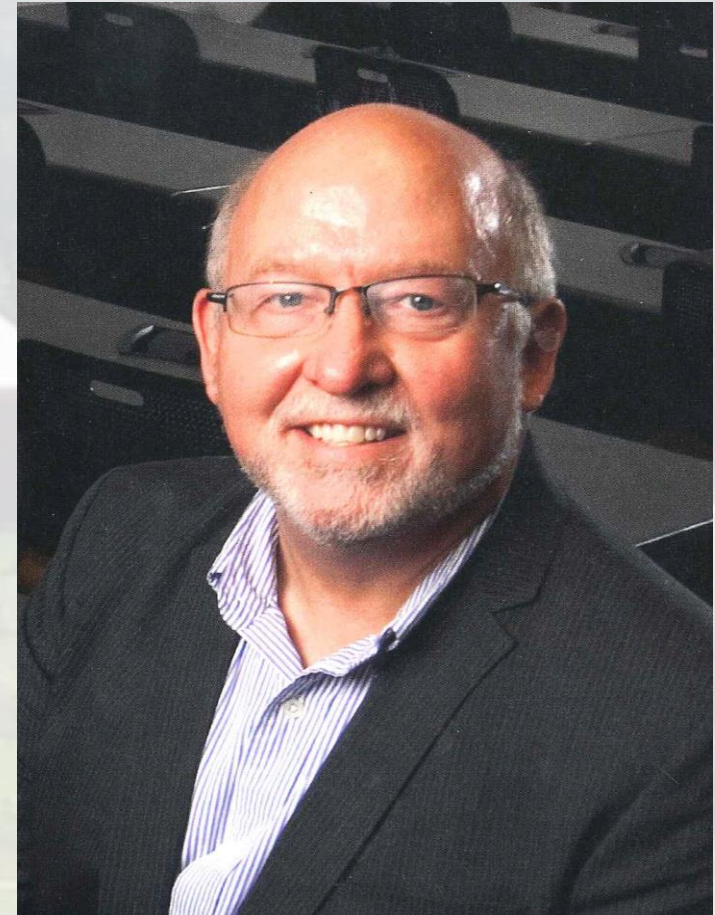
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Background

- Jerry Noack, PA-C
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant
- HRSA Grant 1999-2001
- First cohort of 2 students admitted in 2001
- Have successfully graduated 153 DE students over 22 years
 - DE students from 16 states outside of Wisconsin
- Three current cohorts currently attending (33 students)

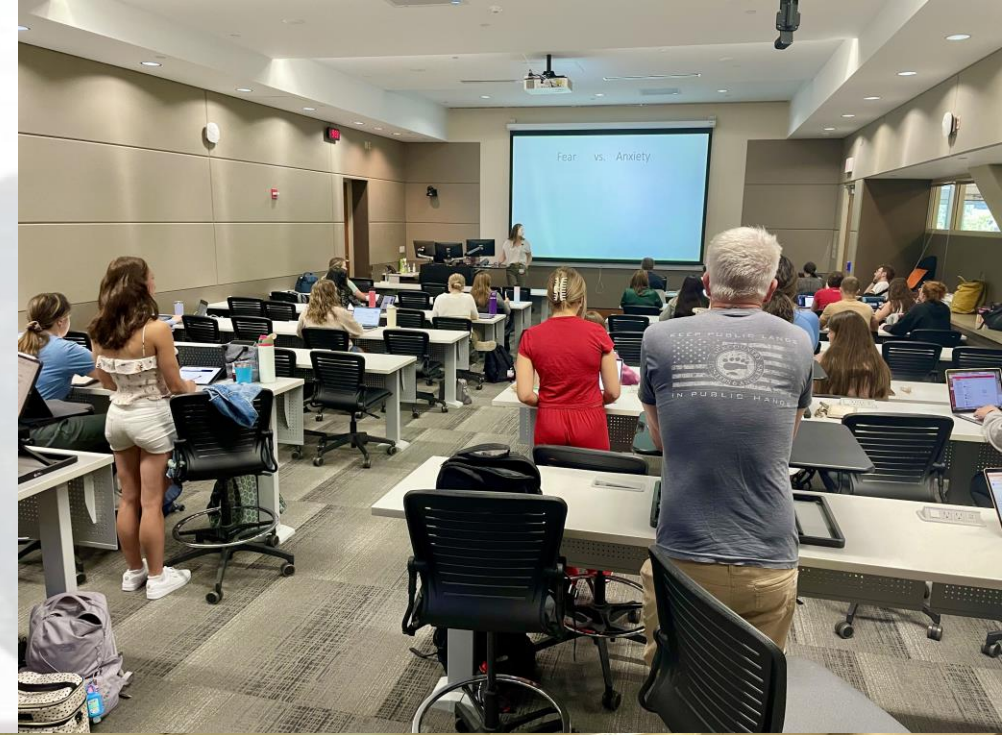


Structure

- Instruction provided through a combination of on-campus residency components and asynchronous distance education (with the option to live-stream)
- DE students are required to spend the first summer of instruction in Madison
- Two DE campus visits each fall and spring semester. Year three is full-time clinical rotations in their home community.

Delivery

- Technology
 - UW-Madison Health Sciences Learning Center
 - Canvas cloud-based learning management system
 - IME Video Library or livestream
 - Exam Master



Support

- Campus support
 - CBL Team
 - Regular team meetings, w/ DE student meeting at each visit
 - Director's Dialogue
 - DE Canvas CBL Student Resources site
 - AV & Classroom Services
 - Ebling Library
 - Communication – email listserve/DE team contact info
 - CBL Student Liaisons

Support

- Community support
 - Home
 - Mentors
 - Proctors
 - Back-up plans



Lessons Learned

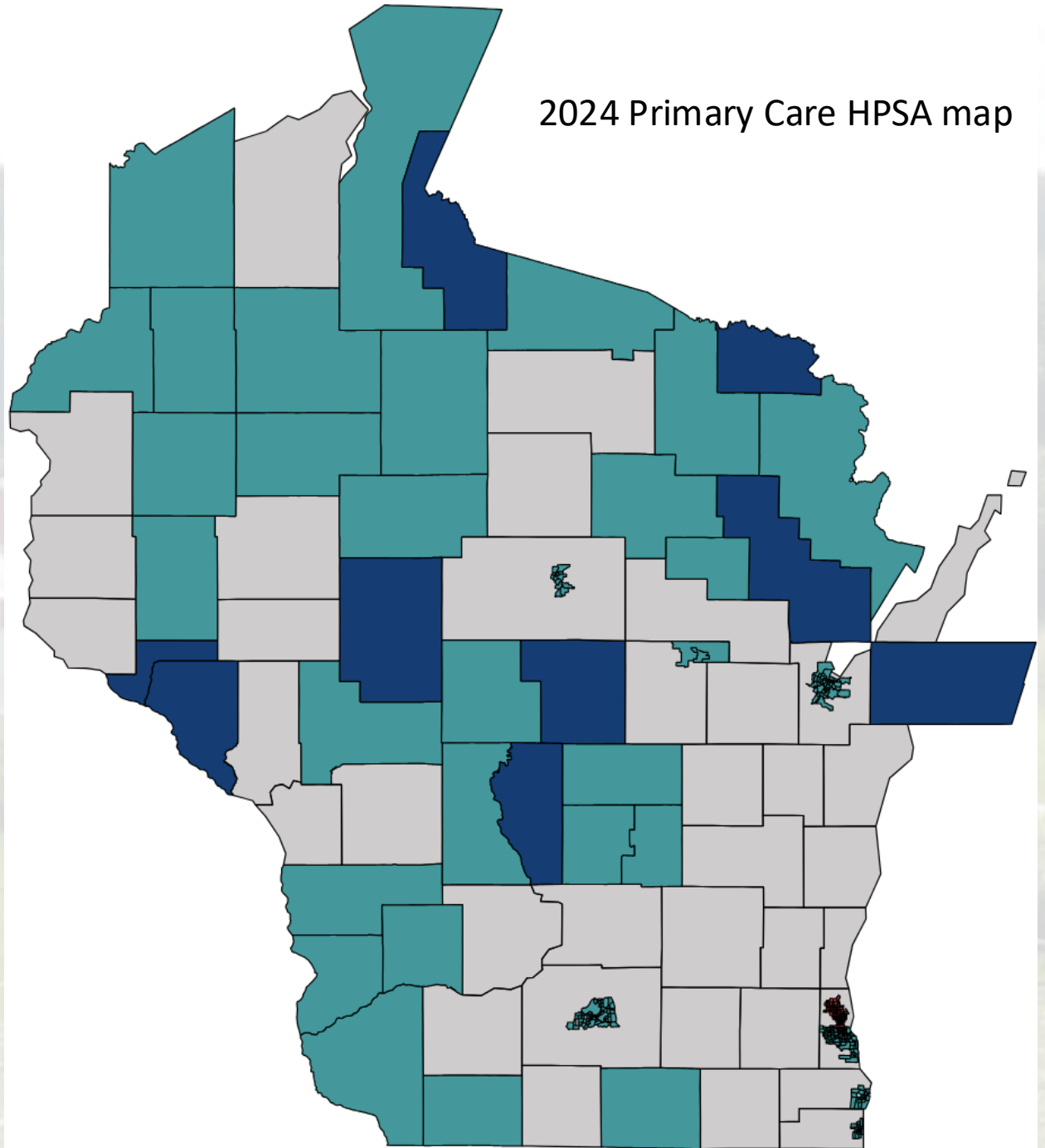
- Additional benefits
 - Deceleration plan
 - Lecture capture
 - Lecturer no shows
 - Review for all students
 - Speed
 - Note-taking/flagging



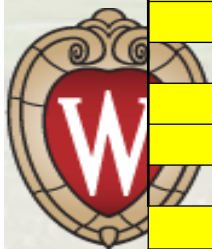
WI Primary Care HPSA's

- 41% of WI is rural or rural adjacent
- By 2035 it is predicted that there will be a shortfall of 745 PC MDs
- In 2021 – 39 PC MDs/100,000 in MUA locations. 78/100,000 in non-MUA locations of WI
- In 2025 WI needed 152 PC MDs to remove the HPSA designation
- To maintain current rates of utilization in PC, 942 PC MDs are needed by 2030 (22% *increase*)

2024 Primary Care HPSA map

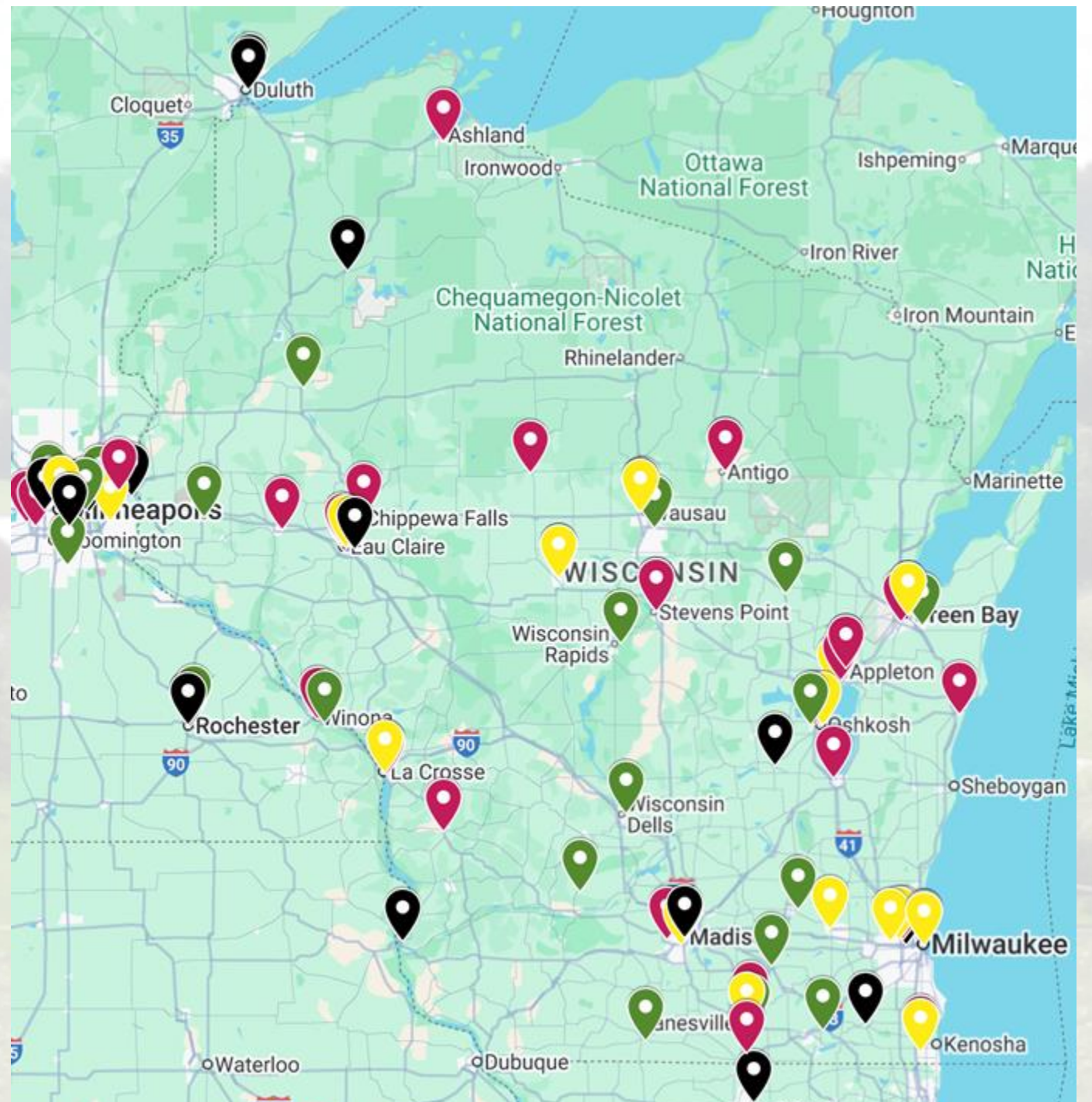


no	no	Mosinee, WI	Yes	no	Weston, WI	0	12	Family Medicine
no	yes	Whitewater, WI	No	Yes	Elkhorn, WI	0	19	Family Medicine
yes	no	Wausau, WI	Yes	no	Wausau, WI	0	0	Emergency Medicine
yes	yes	Amhearst Junction, WI	Yes	Yes	Stevens Point, WI	0	16	Emergency Medicine
yes	no	Milwaukee, WI	Yes	no	Milwaukee, WI	0	0	Specialty/Pain Mgt
yes	no	Wausau, WI	Yes	no	Wausau, WI	0	0	Specialty/Hospitalist
no	no	Waukesha, WI	No	Yes	Watertown, WI	0	32	Internal Med
yes	no	Green Bay, WI	Yes	no	Green Bay, WI	0	0	Surgery/Ortho-Spine
no	no	Eau Claire, WI	No	no	Eau Claire, WI	0	0	Emergency Medicine
yes	no	Green Bay, WI	Yes	no	Green Bay, WI	0	0	Family Medicine
yes	yes	Menomoni, WI	Yes	Yes	Menomoni, WI	0	0	Urgent Care
yes	no	Kenosha, WI	Yes	no	Kenosha, WI	0	0	Emergency Medicine
no	no	Eau Claire, WI	No	no	Eau Claire, WI	0	0	Emergency Medicine
no	no	Stoughton, WI	No	Yes	Fort Atkinson, WI	0	22.5	Family Medicine
no	yes	Mazomanie, WI	Yes	Yes	Winona, MN	1	149	Urgent Care
yes	yes	Rudolph, WI	Yes	Yes	Wisconsin Rapids, WI	0	9	Family Medicine
no	yes	Hudson, WI	Yes	no	St. Paul, MN	1	20	Neurology
yes	yes	Antigo, WI	Yes	Yes	Antigo, WI	0	0	Family Medicine
no	yes	Brownsville, WI	Yes	Yes	Ripon, WI	0	34	Surgery/ORTHO
yes	no	Milton, WI	Yes	no	Janesville, WI	0	8	Neurology
yes	no	Beloit, WI	No	Yes	Burlington, WI	1	46	General Surgery
no	no	Appleton, WI	No	no	Appleton, WI	0	0	Vascular Surgery
yes	no	Kenosha, WI	Yes	no	Kenosha, WI	0	0	Emergency Medicine
no	no	Neenah, WI	No	no	Appleton, WI	0	5	Emergency Medicine
no	yes	Hammond, WI	No	Yes	Baldwin, WI	0	4	Family Medicine
yes	yes	Ferryville, WI	Yes	Yes	Viroqua, WI	0	23	Emergency Medicine
no	no	Appleton, WI	No	no	Appleton, WI	9	0	Emergency Medicine
yes	no	Green Bay, WI	Yes	no	Green Bay, WI	0	0	Internal Med
yes	yes	South Wayne, WI	Yes	Yes	Monroe, WI	0	13	Primary Care
yes	yes	Menomonie, WI	Yes	Yes	Hayward, WI	1	101	Emergency Medicine
no	no	Eau Claire, WI	No	no	Eau Claire, WI	0	0	ENT
yes	yes	Medford, WI	Yes	Yes	Medford, WI	0	0	Emergency Medicine
yes	no	Green Bay, WI	Yes	no	Green Bay, WI	0	0	Urgent Care
no	no	Onalaska, WI	No	no	La Crosse, WI	0	0	Orthpedics/Trauma
yes	no	Green Bay, WI	Yes	no	Green Bay, WI	0	0	Critical Care



DE Grads in HPSAs

- 82 WI DE grads in 22 years
- UW-Madison has our main campus and two distant campuses.
 - UW-Madison - 1974
 - UW-Stevens Point at Wausau - 2014
 - UW-Platteville - 2023
- Graduate 68-72 PAs/year
- *Distance Education Grads*>



DE Grads in HPSAs

Primary Care



Specialty Practice



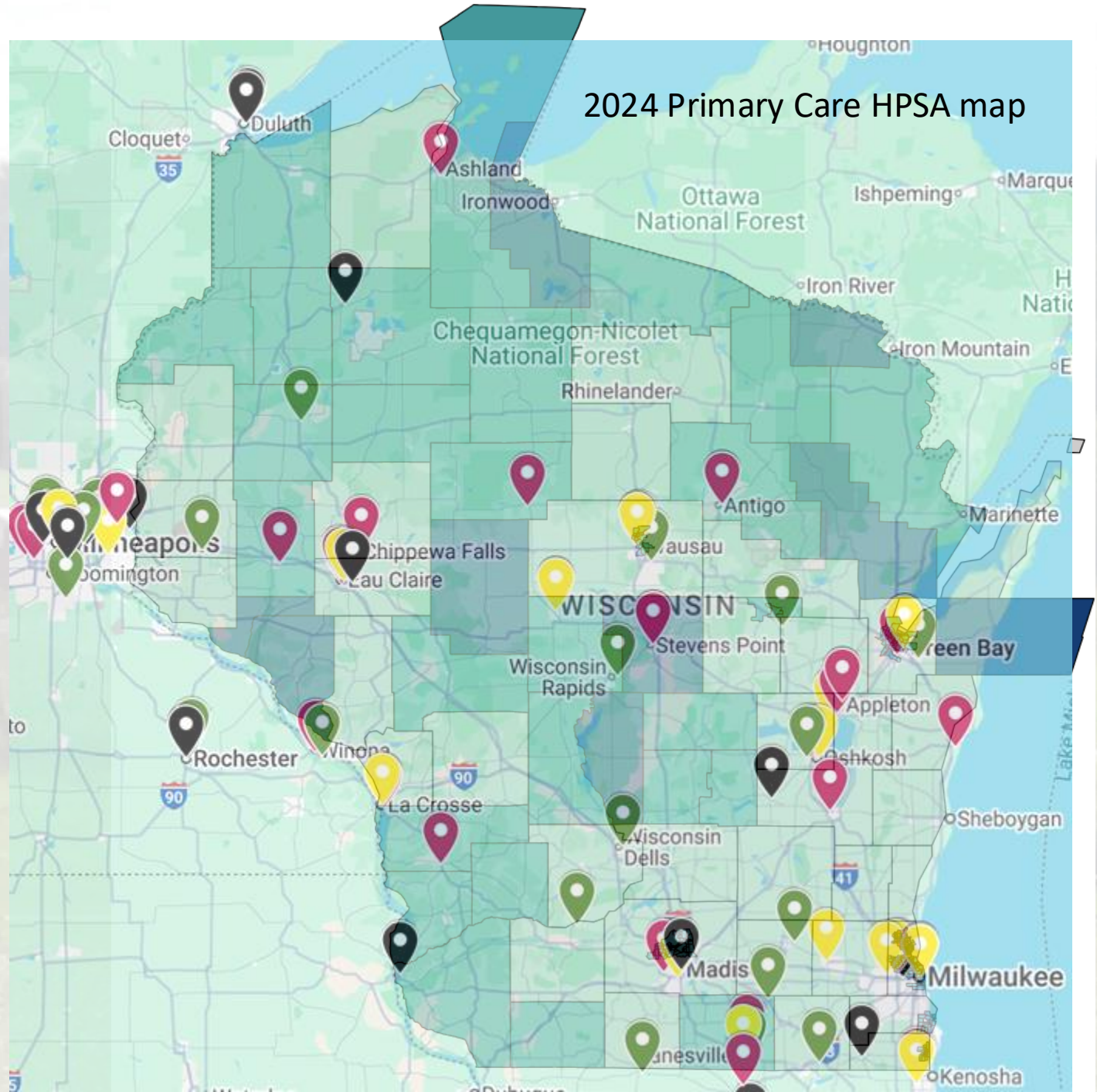
Surgery Specialty



Emergency/Urgent Med

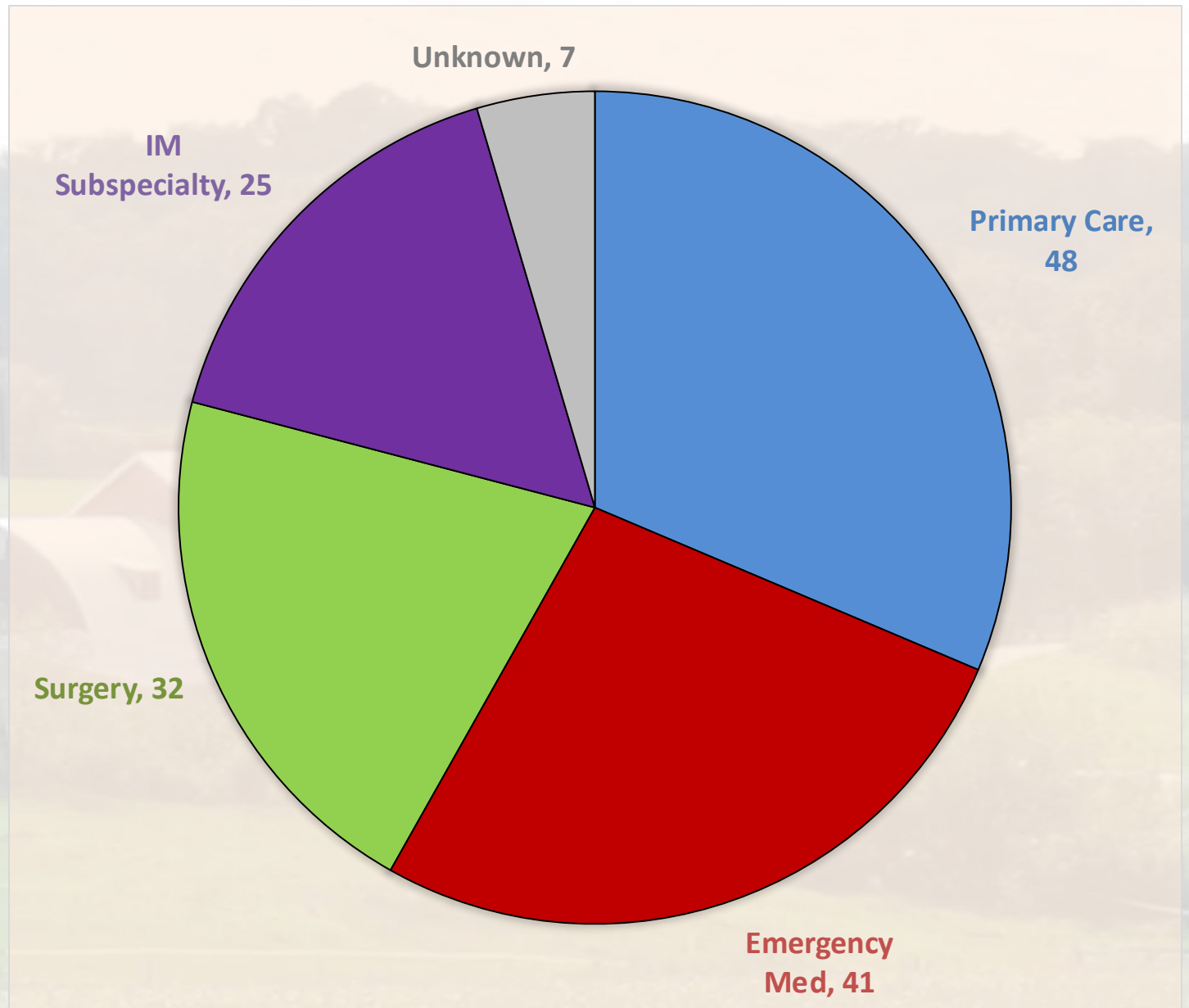


2024 Primary Care HPSA map



Distance Education Data – 22 Years (2004-2025)

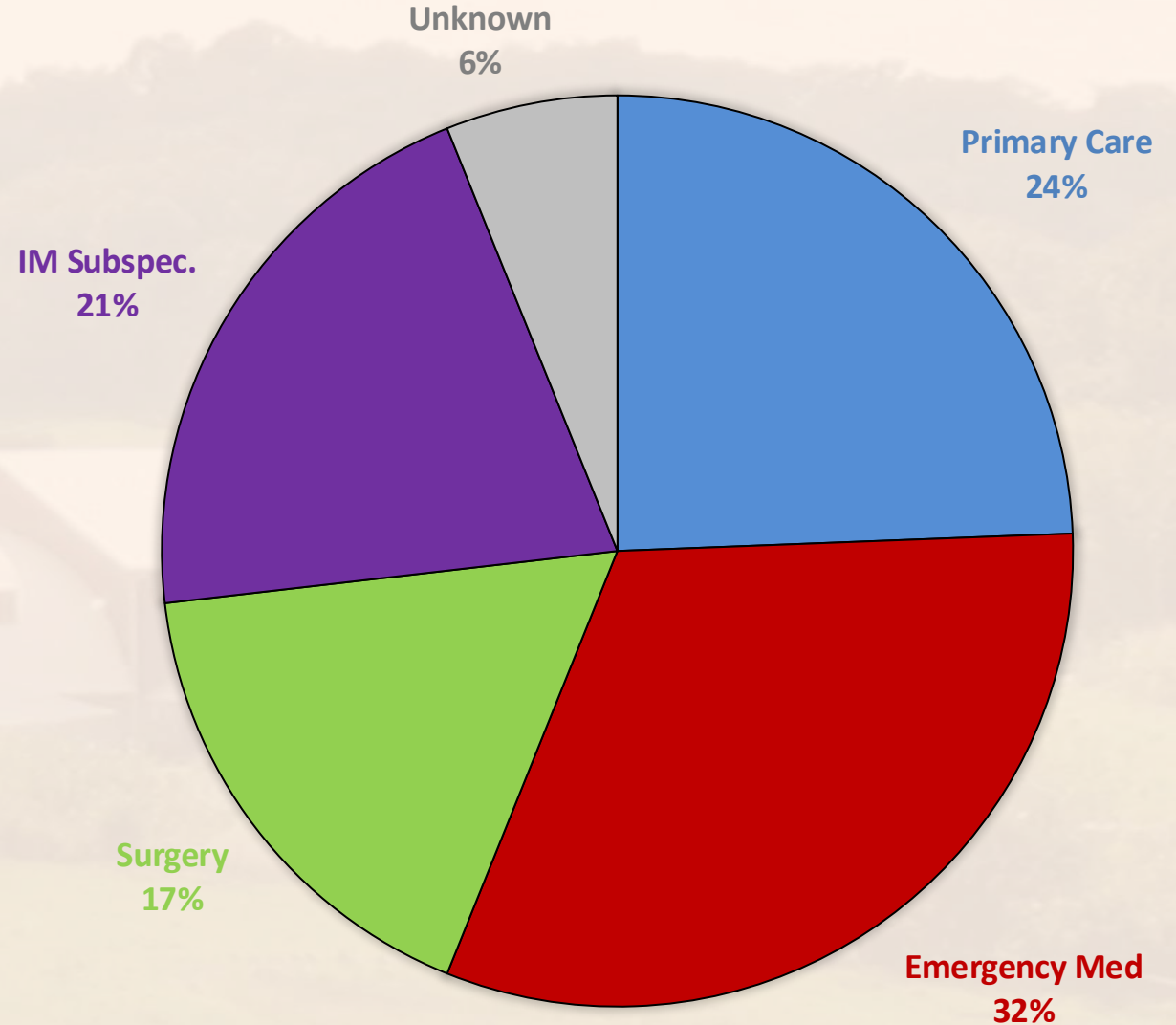
- 153 DE grads from 17 states
- 31% employed in primary care
 - 32 MN DE grads and 41% PC practice



Wisconsin DE Data – 22 Years (2004-2025)

- 42 recruited from HPSA, 32 employed in HPSA (74%)
- 29 recruited from rural area, 18 retained rurally (62%)
- Primary care numbers lower in Wisconsin (24%)
 - 20 grads hired in PC, 14 of which are rural
 - MN has 41% of the DE grads in primary care
- 10 recruited from HPSA, 13 hired into HPSA

UW-MADISON PA DE GRADUATE PLACEMENT (N=82)

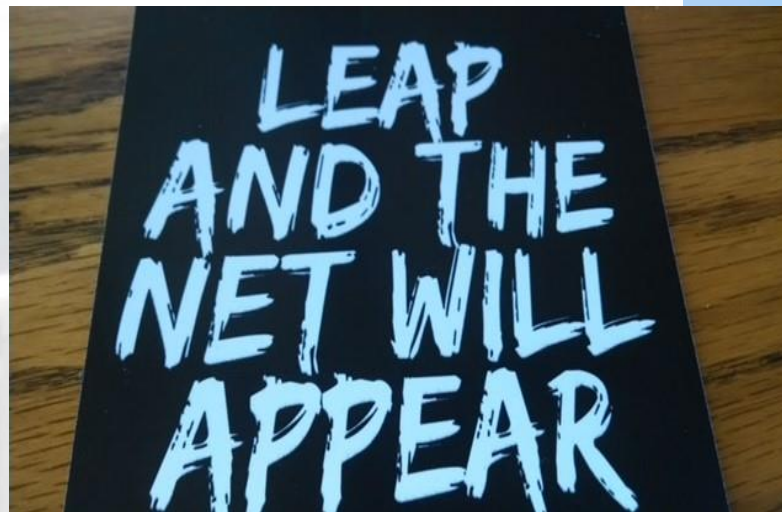


Dodge County, WI



- Rural Population- 49,066 (55.1%)
- Urban Population- 40,330 (44.9%)
- 2,979 Farms
- Horicon Marsh – National Wildlife Refuge + State Wildlife area- 33,000 acres total



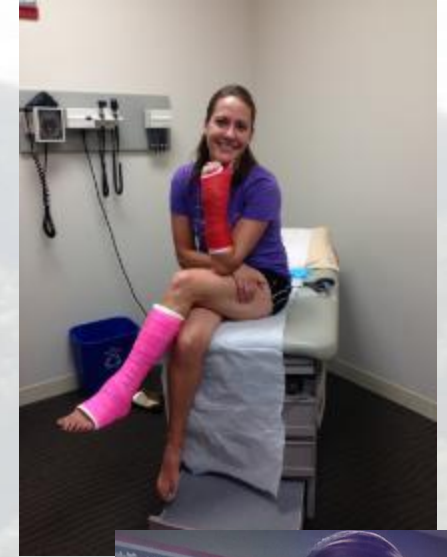


- Accepted into UW-Madison Distance Education PA Program in 2013
- My age, 35
- My kids were 9 and 6
- Worked 3 days a week for 2 didactic years, after first summer on campus and before clinical year
- 13 years as a Clinical Laboratory Scientist
- 3 years as a molecular research technician



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- Clinical rotations were almost all within 15 miles of my home—Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Emergency Medicine, General and Orthopedic Surgery, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, Wound Clinic
- Job shadowed Urology, Cardiology, Rheumatology, Dermatology, Gastroenterology, and Women's Health



- Graduated in 2016, at age 38
- My kids were 12 and 9
- First job- Float PA for SSM Health Fond du Lac
 - Orthopedic Surgery
 - Gastroenterology
 - Family Practice
 - Long-Term Care
- Second job- Primary Care Provider at Mayville and Campbellsport Clinics



Current Position



- Reopened Marshfield Medical Center Beaver Dam- Waupun Center in 2022
- Clinic was closed from March 2020 until April 2022 due to COVID and difficulties with recruitment
- Waupun population 11,131
- 12 miles from my home in rural Dodge County
- Current patient panel: 1,004
- Primary Care for all Ages-acute illness, chronic illness, preventative care
- Perform steroid knee, shoulder, hip bursa injections, and trigger point injections
- Receive referrals from all over the Marshfield system for treating Obesity, both in person and by telemedicine



Retention

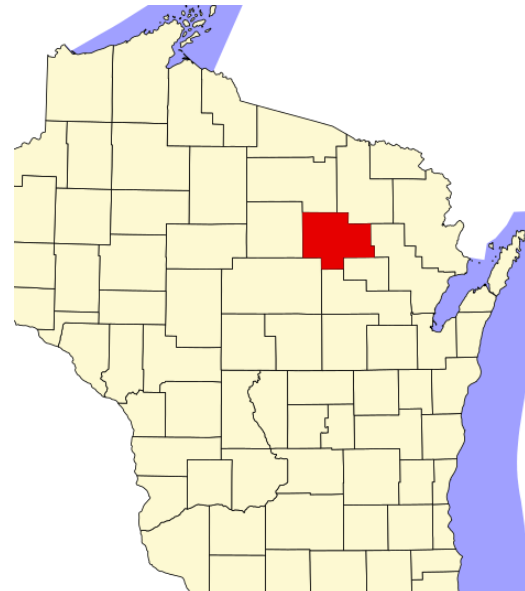
- Waupun Center was closed from March 2020 until April 2022
- During that time, many patients did not receive primary care or continue medications
- In the last several year prior to closing, Waupun Center had 2 providers that stayed only a short time each
- Columbus Clinic also has had 3 different providers since I started and is currently closed due to provider returning to her home country.





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- I received an excellent education primarily in my home community, which also provided the least disruption to my family.
- Clinical rotations were local, enabling networking and many local job offers!
- By selecting students that have strong roots in rural and underserved communities as well as an interest in Primary Care, the UW-Madison Physician Assistant Distance Education Program is filling a critical need for well-trained providers in these areas that are most in need.
- Thank you to the UW-Madison Distance Education PA Program for helping me fulfil a dream to provide healthcare in the community where I grew up and still live!



Langlade County, WI

- Population: 20,740
- Antigo, WI
 - Largest city 8,100 people and County seat
- Crop- Potatoes
- 130,000 acres of forest
- County of Trails
 - ATV, hiking, biking, skiing



Starting Line

- Accepted into UW-Madison Distance Education PA Program in 2013
- Age 31
- Kids : 11, 8, and 6
- Worked 3 days a week during didactic years
- 9 years as a Clinical Laboratory Scientist at my local hospital



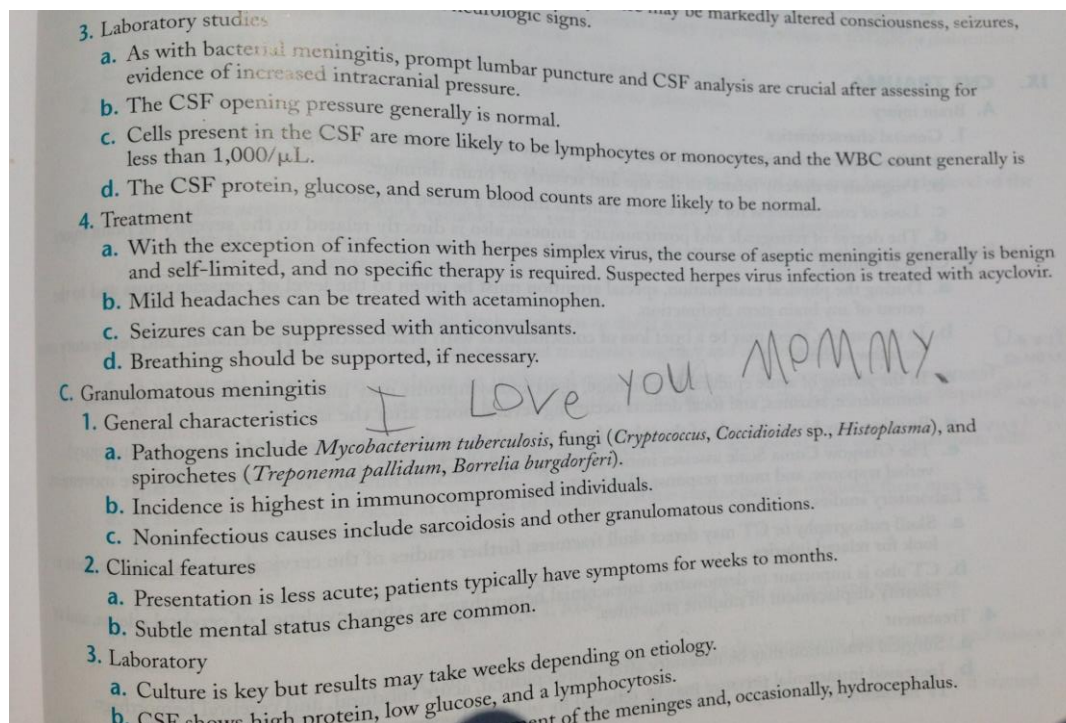
Clinical Rotations

- Rural and Urban locations within 45 minutes of my home
- Family Medicine, Inpatient and Outpatient Internal Medicine, Emergency Medicine, General and Cardiothoracic Surgery, Women's Health- including OB w/ deliveries
- Numerous opportunities for procedures and interaction with providers, staff and patients



Finish Line

- Graduated in 2016
- Age 34
- Children ages 14, 11, and 9
- First Job- Aspirus Antigo Clinic
 - Family Practice
 - Completed FP, partial IM and GYN rotation (I called it my 20-week interview)





Wisconsin



Current Position

- Aspirus Antigo clinic
- Hired prior to Graduation in 2016
- Specialties in my clinic : IM, GYN, General Surgery, Psych
- Specialties on site: Oncology, RadiationOnc, Cardiology, Vascular Surgery, ENT, Urology, and Pulmonology
- 25 bed Critical Access hospital attached to clinic with ER and Urgent care.
- 2 outlying clinic- Elcho and Birnamwood
- Current patient panel : 1300 (and growing)
- Primary Care for EVERYONE!!!
- Procedures: Knee, shoulder, hip bursa, and trigger point injections, toenail removal, IUD removal, skin biopsy and excision, wart treatments, suture removals, splinting



Retention



- Struggle with FP/IM physician recruitment
- Currently 1 of 5 APC in clinic
- Antigo Community lost 6 providers in last 6 months
- Concern of ability to provide good quality care due to lack of access
- Provider Burnout

-
- Excellent and cutting-edge education both in didactic and clinical year
 - Distance and In person
 - Allowing school, work, and life balance during all years of learning
 - Pursuing placement of local clinical rotations which allows for personal and professional connections
 - Maintaining a priority to seek students with roots in their rural health community and a focus on primary care fulfills the critical need for skilled providers in risk areas
 - UW-Madison Distance Education PA Program ensured I would achieve my goal of providing care to MY community



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Physician Assistant Program

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Closing Comments

