

A narrative review of rural access to vascular care

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Abstract:

Objective: In order to characterize rural populations' access to vascular care, this paper consolidates a literature review of various vascular medical presentations and their prevalence in the rural community.

Background: As vascular surgery cases shift away general surgery practice, rural populations have increasing disparities in accessing vascular care. There are multiple factors leading to this discrepancy, including long travel distances, lack of specialized medical care, facilities without proper equipment, and more. The recent regionalization of specialized surgical care has somewhat improved access, but vascular health still has a long way to go. Rural patients have much higher rates of mortality in high-risk presentations such as acute coronary syndrome, acute ischemic stroke, high-risk aortic disease, chronic limb ischemia, and end-stage renal disease.

Methods: This paper concentrates on the intersection of rural populations with vascular surgery care. The literature review consists of mostly original investigations and mainly those in or translated into English. Most of the references were found by Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) search on PubMed and reviewing citations in relevant literature. Key words for the literature search were "vascular surgery" AND "rural health" OR "rural population" OR "rural health services" OR "hospitals, rural." The literature review revealed 54 appropriate papers.

Conclusions: Despite the implementation of programs and policies to address these disparities, they continue to persist especially in high-risk medical presentations.