

## What improves primary healthcare service delivery in rural communities: a systematic literature review

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### **Rural communities and primary health care service delivery**

Rural populations have greater overall health needs and face substantial difficulties obtaining care. Implementing needs-based, comprehensive, accessible, effective and sustainable rural healthcare delivery system is needed to provide care for the community when and where they want it in more local and convenient settings.

### **Objective of the review**

This systematic literature review was conducted to identify key strategies from the international experiences to improve primary healthcare (PHC) service delivery in rural communities.

### **Methods**

All published and unpublished articles were searched from MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL, AccessMedicine, Scopus, Web of Science, WHO Global Health Library, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Worldcat. The methodological quality of the included studies was assessed using the mixed methods appraisal tool (MMAT) version 2018. The included full-text articles were qualitatively analyzed using emergent thematic analysis approach to identify key concepts and code them into related non-mutually exclusive themes. We then synthesized each theme by comparing the discussion and conclusion of the included articles.

### **Results**

Our analysis of 87 full-text articles identified ten key strategies from the international experience to improve PHC service delivery: community health programs, school-based healthcare services, community-directed interventions, student-led healthcare services, outreach services, family health program, mobile clinics, telemedicine, working with traditional healers, and working with faith-based organizations.

### **Program implications**

The ten key strategies identified are effective to improve access and delivery of healthcare services in rural communities. They could also play roles in achieving universal health coverage and reducing disparities in health outcomes among the rural communities. Incorporating the key strategies suggested by this review into the healthcare delivery system would continue to enhance PHC services and minimize disparities in rural communities.

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