

RUPRI Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis

Rural Data Brief

Brief No. 2020-10

December 2020

<http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/rupri/>

Pharmacy Vaccination Service Availability in Nonmetropolitan Counties (revised)¹

Fred Ullrich, BA; and Keith Mueller, PhD

Report

Retail pharmacies will play a significant role in the public distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently announced that the U.S. government will partner with “large chain pharmacies and networks that represent independent pharmacies and regional chains.”² Since 2007 the RUPRI Center has tracked pharmacy closures and the availability of pharmacy services in rural areas. This brief explores the availability of rural pharmacies that might be able to provide vaccination services.

Data

The National Council for Prescription Drug Programs (NCPDP)³ is an ANSI-accredited, standards development organization. The NCPDP provides every licensed pharmacy in the U.S. a unique, national identification number used by processors, pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), carriers, manufacturers, health plans, State and Federal government entities, and State Pharmacy Boards. The attendant NCPDP database provides an array of information on pharmacy characteristics, including classifications, location(s), ownership, and services provided (including some level of on-site immunization capability).⁴ All data is self-reported by pharmacies. The November 2020 version of the database provides data on the 80,443 pharmacy entities in the 50 states and the District of Columbia that did not indicate that they would close prior to 1/1/2021.

A significant number of the entities represented in the NCPDP data will be unlikely to provide vaccination resources because of the nature of their business. Distribution sites for mail-order pharmacies not offering in-person services and businesses specializing in providing durable medical equipment or home health supplies have been excluded from this analysis. Similarly, pharmacies directly associated with existing health care facilities (such as clinics or hospitals) may not be positioned to provide additional personnel to a vaccination program beyond the health care facility staff already providing vaccinations and were also excluded from this analysis. Classes of pharmacies retained for this analysis include independent, chain, franchise, and government pharmacies. The vast majority of these are community/retail pharmacies, but they also include Indian Health Service, managed care organization, and Department of Veterans Affairs pharmacies. The final dataset contained data on 62,352 pharmacies that might be likely to contribute to actual administration of vaccine. In this report, we refer to these as “eligible” pharmacies. Pharmacies affiliated with 16 of the 19 HHS ‘partners’ were identified in the NCPDP data, an additional partner independently provided data identifying their participating pharmacies^{1,6}. The remaining two partners appear to have ‘third party contracting group’ relationships with pharmacies and their impact on personal vaccine administration is unclear.



#1U1GRH07633. The information, conclusions and opinions expressed in this policy brief are those of the authors and no endorsement by FORHP, HRSA, HHS is intended or should be inferred.

This project was supported by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under cooperative agreement/grant



RUPRI Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis, University of Iowa College of Public Health, Department of Health Management and Policy, 145 Riverside Dr., Iowa City, IA 52242-2007, (319) 384-3830 <http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/rupri> E-mail: cph-rupri-inquiries@uiowa.edu

Nonmetropolitan status was based on the March 2020 Office of Management and Budget delineation⁵ of the county of a pharmacy's physical location. Counties (or equivalent) designated as either micropolitan or with no designation are both included as nonmetropolitan for this report.

Findings

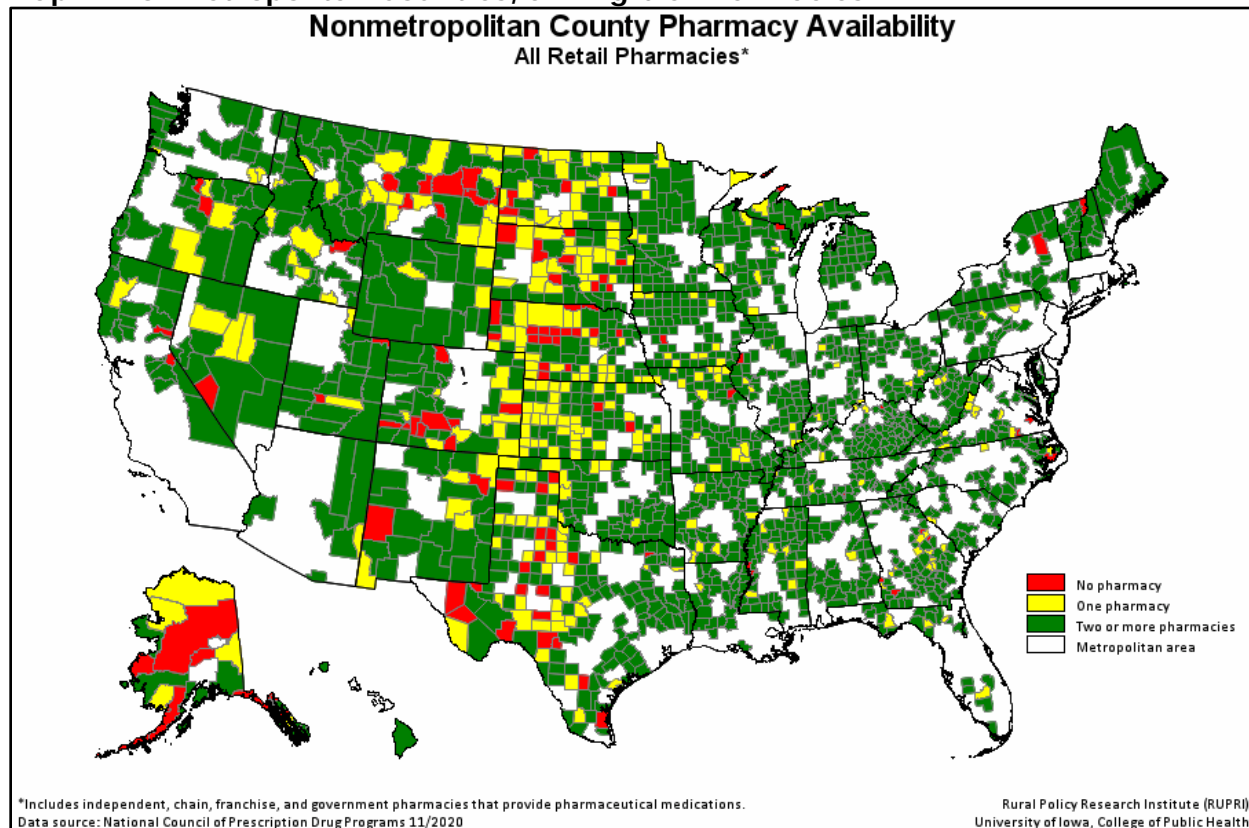
There are 9,826 eligible pharmacies operating in 1,962 nonmetropolitan counties. These represent 15.8% of all eligible pharmacies in the U.S. While the majority of nonmetropolitan counties (n = 1,545, 78.7 percent) have two or more eligible pharmacies, 110 counties have no eligible pharmacy. If only pharmacies affiliated with one of the 19 HHS partnership chains/networks⁶ are considered, the number of counties without an eligible pharmacy increases to 688. If the pharmacies in the partnership are supplemented by other pharmacies indicating that they provide on-site immunization service, 321 nonmetropolitan counties are without an eligible pharmacy. These findings are summarized in Table 1 and represented in Maps 1-3.

Table 1. Pharmacy Immunization Service Availability in Nonmetropolitan Counties

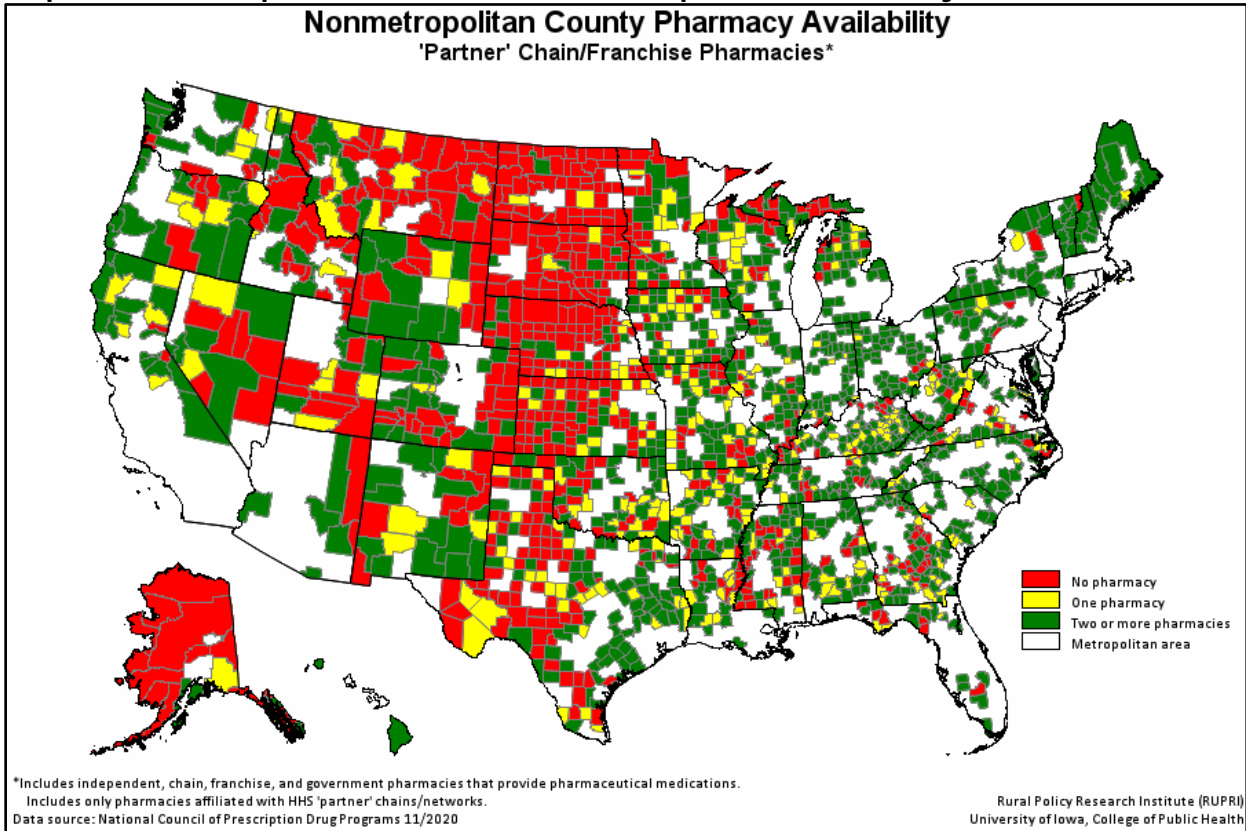
	All Pharmacies		'Partnership' Pharmacies ^a Only		'Partnership' Pharmacies ^a or other Pharmacies Providing Immunization Service	
	Counties	Population ^b	Counties	Population ^b	Counties	Population ^b
0 Pharmacies	110	263,007	688	4,907,481	321	1,458,570
1 Pharmacy	307	1,752,496	323	4,793,099	307	2,676,757
2+ Pharmacies	1,545	43,414,872	951	35,729,795	1,334	41,295,048

- a. Includes only pharmacies affiliated with the chains/networks that are part of the HHS partnership.
 b. Population based on 2018 American Community Survey five-year population estimates.

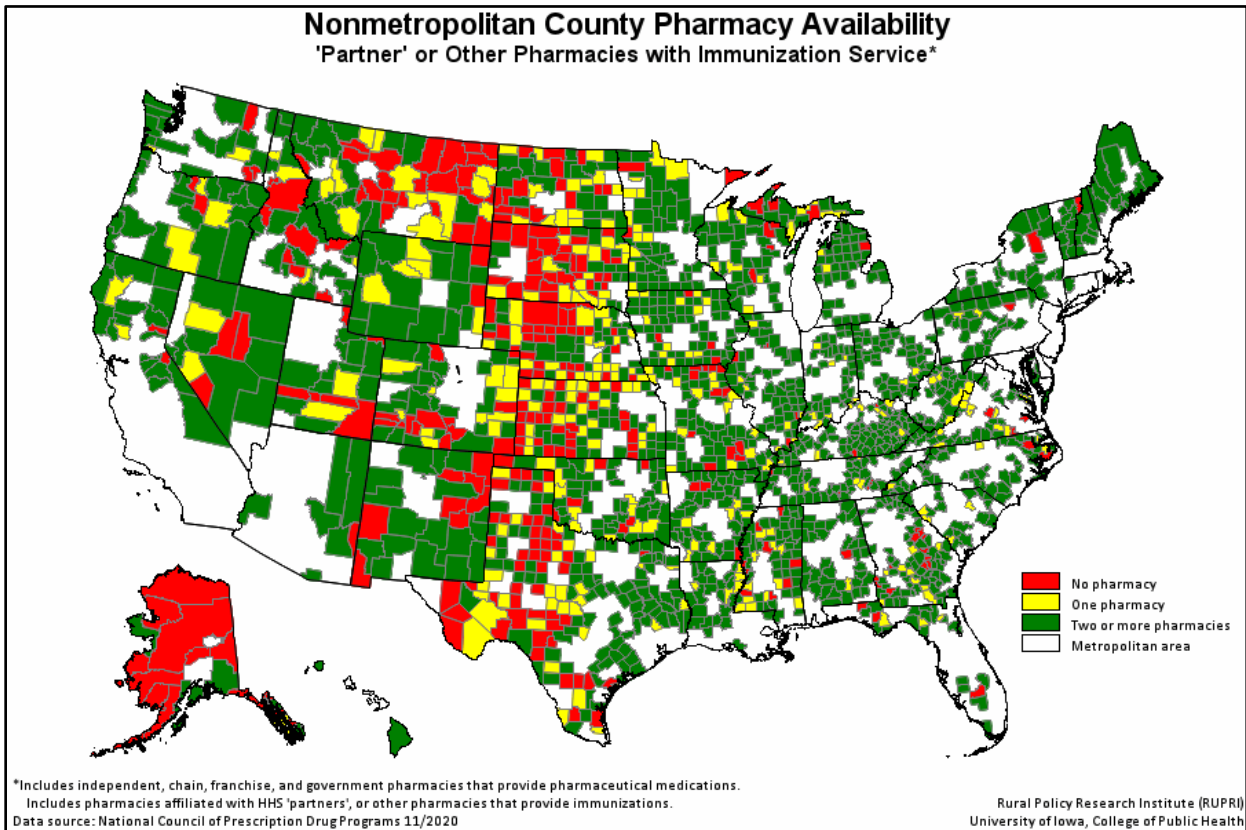
Map 1. Nonmetropolitan Counties, all Eligible Pharmacies



Map 2. Nonmetropolitan Counties, Partnership Pharmacies Only



Map 3. Nonmetropolitan Counties with Partnership Pharmacies or Other Pharmacies that Provide Immunization Service



Notes/References

¹ The brief was updated 1/12/2021 following receipt of data enabling identification of pharmacies affiliated with CPESN USA, LLC.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Trump Administration Partners with Chain and Independent Community Pharmacies to Increase Access to Future COVID-19 Vaccines." *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*. 12 Nov. 2020, <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/11/12/trump-administration-partners-chain-independent-community-pharmacies-increase-access-future-covid-19-vaccines.html>. Accessed 9 Dec. 2020.

³ National Council for Prescription Drug Programs. <https://www.ncdp.org/>.

⁴ National Council for Prescription Drug Programs. DataQ™ Pharmacy Database File Standard, Implementation Guide Version 3.1, p7.

⁵ US Census Bureau. "Delineation Files." *The United States Census Bureau*, 13 Apr. 2020,

www.census.gov/geographies/reference-files/time-series/demo/metro-micro/delineation-files.html. Accessed 9 Dec. 2020.

⁶ Pharmacy chain and community-pharmacy networks that had signed to partner with HHS:

- Albertsons Companies, Inc. (incl., Osco, Jewel-Osco, Albertsons, Albertsons Market, Safeway, Tom Thumb, Star Market, Shaws, Haggen, Acme, Randalls, Carrs, Market Street, United, Vons, Pavilions, Amigos, Lucky's, Pak n Save, Sav-On)
- Costco Wholesale Corp.
- CPESN USA, LLC
- CVS Pharmacy, Inc. (incl. Long's)
- Good Neighbor Pharmacy and AmerisourceBergen Drug Corporation's PSAO, Elevate Provider
- Health Mart Systems, Inc.
- H-E-B, LP
- Hy-Vee, Inc.
- LeaderNET and Medicine Shoppe, Cardinal Health's PSAOs
- Managed Health Care Associates (MHA)
- Meijer Inc.
- Publix Super Markets, Inc.
- Retail Business Services, LLC (incl., Food Lion, Giant Food, The Giant Company, Hannaford Bros Co, Stop & Shop)
- Rite Aid Corp.
- The Kroger Co. (incl., Kroger, Harris Teeter, Fred Meyer, Frys, Ralphs, King Soopers, Smiths, City Market, Dillons, Marianos, Pick-n-Save, Copps, Metro Market)
- Topco Associates, LLC (incl. Big-Y Pharmacy and Wellness Center, Brookshire's Pharmacy, Super One Pharmacy, FRESH by Brookshire's Pharmacy, Coborn's Pharmacy, Cash Wise Pharmacy, MarketPlace Pharmacy, Hartig Drug Company, King Kullen, Food City Pharmacy, Ingles Pharmacy, Raley's, Bel Air, Nob Hill Pharmacies, Save Mart Pharmacies, Lucky Pharmacies, SpartanNash, Price Chopper, Market 32, Tops Friendly Markets, ShopRite, Wegmans, Weis Markets, Acme Fresh Markets)
- Walgreens (incl. Duane Reade)
- Walmart, Inc. (incl. Sam's Club)
- Winn-Dixie Stores Inc. (incl. Winn-Dixie, Harveys, Fresco Y Mas)

We have been unable to identify pharmacies affiliated with Health Mart Systems, and Managed Health Care Associates.