



Telehealth Barriers and Facilitators in the Frontier

Saira N. Haque, PhD, MHSA

Senior Health Informaticist
eHealth, Quality and Analytics

Discussion Topics

- Frontier Setting
- Uses of Telehealth
- Barriers and Facilitators to Telehealth Implementation
- Conclusion

What is the Frontier?

Federal office of rural health policy designation of less than 11 people per square mile

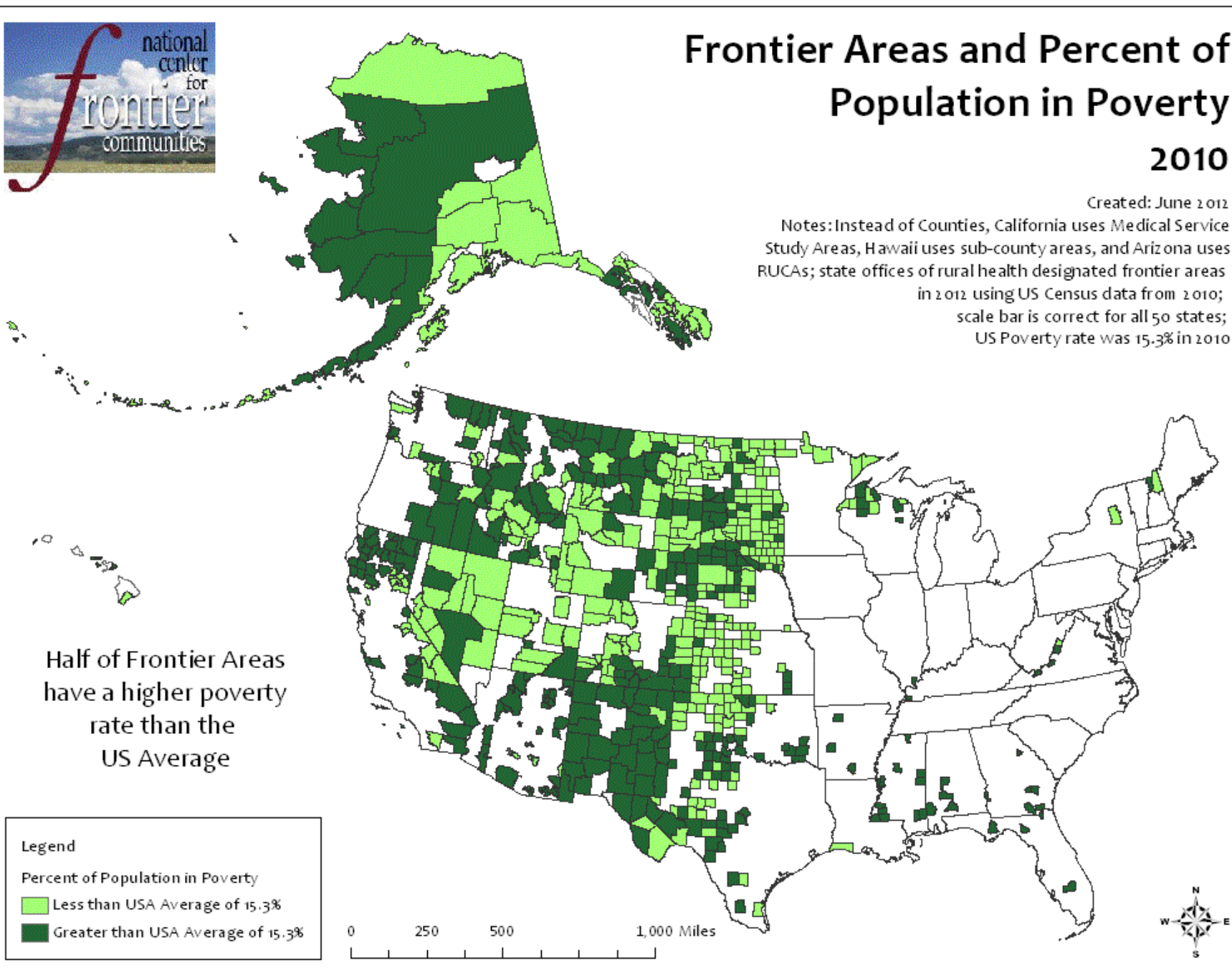
Unique population concerns



Frontier Areas and Percent of Population in Poverty 2010

Created: June 2012

Notes: Instead of Counties, California uses Medical Service Study Areas, Hawaii uses sub-county areas, and Arizona uses RUCAs; state offices of rural health designated frontier areas in 2012 using US Census data from 2010; scale bar is correct for all 50 states; US Poverty rate was 15.3% in 2010



Characteristics of the Frontier Setting



Sparse population density – “super rural”



Geographically isolated from population centers and services

Paved roads

Seasonal changes to access to services



Workforce challenges

Provider recruitment

Provider turnover

Professional isolation



Inconsistent broadband connectivity

The ACA and Overcoming Frontier Challenges

8 Frontier Provisions within the ACA

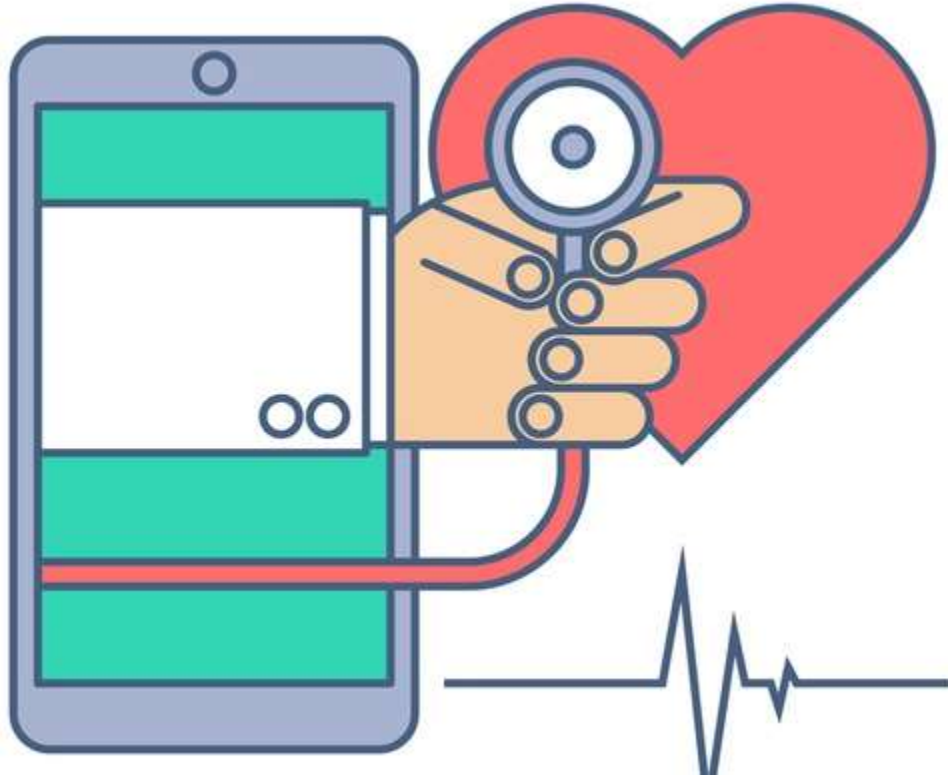
- Medicare beneficiary access to services
- Data collection for minority groups including underserved minority and frontier populations
- Designation of a frontier “health professional shortage area”
- Representation on the National Health Care Workforce Commission
- Wage adjustment factors for outpatient department services and a practice expense index for physician services
- A public health surveillance system grant requiring no less than 20 percent of funds be made available to rural and frontier areas

ACA provisions also impact Native Americans

Other Efforts to Overcome Frontier Challenges

- FCC programs to enhance connectivity and internet access
- Special provisions for telehealth service provision and reimbursement by CMS
- CMS-funded Frontier Community Health Innovation program was designed to
 - 8 Critical Access Hospitals in Montana, Nevada and North Dakota were awarded funding for demonstration project
 - Includes adjustment to payment models for telehealth reimbursement for Critical Access Hospitals participating in the demonstration

Methods to Review Demonstration Efforts



- Review of reports
 - Quarterly reports
 - Implementation calls
- Site visits
 - In-person
 - Phone calls
- Claims review
- Coding of documents

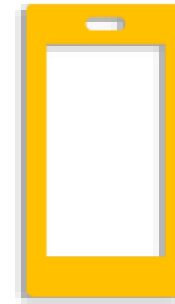
Telehealth Uses



**Use of technology to enhance
health care delivery**

Synchronous

Provider to patient direct care



**Telehealth can improve access
in several ways**

Patients who are not mobile

Access to providers in other areas

Uses of Telehealth

- Emergency Room
- Neurology
- Chronic Condition Management
- Dermatology
- Genetic counseling
- Nephrology
- Behavioral Health



Factors Influencing
Telehealth
Implementation

Distant Providers

Organizational Aspects

Provider Acceptance

Patient Acceptance

Marketing and Outreach

Implementation Support

Distant Providers

- Availability of specialists
 - Capacity
- Appointments in a timely fashion
- Relationships with providers
- Delegated credentialing
- Information sharing and coordination

Organizational Aspects

- Integration of telehealth into clinical and administrative processes
- Scheduling visits
- Staff role changes
- Low volume influenced integration

Provider Acceptance



INTEGRATION OF TELEHEALTH
INTO CLINICAL AND
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES



SCHEDULING VISITS



STAFF ROLE CHANGES

Patient Acceptance

**Different
model of
care**

**Overcame
barriers such
as travel**

General efforts in the community

- Newspapers
- Billboards
- Radio
- Social media

Referral sources outside the facility

- LTPAC facilities
- Neighboring hospitals
- Other providers in the area

Implementation Support

- Assistance with telehealth implementation
 - Vendor selection
 - Provider relationships
 - General implementation support

Conclusions

- Need to address challenges specific to Frontier community in a holistic manner
 - Workforce
 - Providers
 - Patients
 - Workflow
 - Volumes



delivering **the promise of science**
for global good



Saira N. Haque, PhD, MHSA
Senior Health Informaticist
shaque@rti.org
@sairanhaque