

Rural Medical School Competes With City Life

VOA Special English (voaspecialenglish.com) is Voice of America's daily news and information service for English learners. Read the story and then do the activities at the end.

This is the VOA Special English Education Report.

Many rural areas in the United States have no doctor. Some medical schools are trying different ways to treat the problem. One idea is to educate doctors in smaller communities and hope they stay. Dr. William Cathcart-Rake heads a new program at the University of Kansas in the Midwest.

WILLIAM CATHCART-RAKE: "We need more docs. There's somewhere like a quarter of all of our physicians in Kansas are sixty years of age or older. So we need to be replacing physicians, too."

He says medical students from rural areas now typically study in Wichita or Kansas City, two of the biggest cities in Kansas.

WILLIAM CATHCART-RAKE: "They say, 'You know, I really have every intention of coming back to rural Kansas,' but they meet a soul mate, they get married, their soul mate happens to be from a big city and we never see them again. They get captured in the big city. Hopefully, if we train them in smaller communities, they can meet the prospective spouses here, they can network here, and they have those connections which can hopefully be lifelong."

The program is based in Kansas' tenth largest city, Salina, home to about fifty thousand people. Salina is about a three-hour drive from Kansas City, past fields of corn, soybeans and cattle.

Student Claire Hinrichsen grew up in a town of about six hundred people. She attended the University of Kansas, or KU, as an undergraduate. One reason she chose the Salina program is because of the size. There are only eight students -- the smallest medical school in the country. Classes are taught by professors in Salina or on a video link from Kansas City or Wichita.

Ms. Hinrichsen talked about the program with reporter David Weinberg.

CLAIRE HINRICHSEN: "I really like it. I know everybody in my class. We are close and it's a nice feeling. I went to KU, so I went to a big school, and I'm getting back to the small feel. I like it a lot."

DAVID WEINBERG: "How do these two compare, like going to KU and going here?"

CLAIRE HINRICHSEN: "They're a lot different. My first class in general chemistry in KU had more people in that lecture hall than there were in my town! So it was a big change and it was hard to get used to having so many people there."

Students who complete the four-year program will then do their residency training in a small community in the surrounding area. One place a resident might work is the Clay Center Clinic, where Dr. Kerry Murphy is a family physician.

KERRY MURPHY: "This is a clinic that has currently eight doctors and four mid-level practitioners and we cover, of course, this town, but we also have satellite clinics in two nearby towns. We just kind of operate as a what I call a 'cradle-to-grave operation.' We deliver babies and go all the way up to doing nursing home care."

Rural doctors generally serve older, poorer patients. Going into a specialty in a big city can mean better working hours and more money to pay off student loans.

The Salina program will pay tuition for each year that students practice in a rural area in Kansas. Dr. Cathcart-Rake hopes four years of medical school and two years of residency will be enough time to put down roots.

WILLIAM CATHCART-RAKE: "It's going to be hopefully harder for them to break away from those roots and go to bigger cities."

Now do the worksheet ...

Level: beginner - intermediate

Time: 20 -30 minutes

This worksheet will help you learn new vocabulary about doctors. You will answer questions about the shortage of rural doctors in the US, and write a short paragraph about doctors in your country.

1. What does *rural* mean?

in the city

in the country

in a hospital

2. What is another word for *physician*?

doctor

student

professor

3. What does it mean to *train* someone?

to learn from them

to buy something from someone

to teach them

4. What is the article about?

there aren't enough doctors in rural areas

there are too many doctors in rural areas

5. Read the sentence below. Is it *true* or *false*? If it is false, correct the sentence.

A way to get doctors to stay in rural areas is to educate them there.

6. Where does Dr. William Cathcart-Rake work?

7. What reasons does Dr. William Cathcart-Rake give for doctors leaving rural Kansas?

8. What is Kansas' tenth largest city? How many people live there?

9. Claire Hinrichsen is a student. How does she describe her classes?

10. Complete the following blanks with *rural* or *city* to make true sentences.

A _____ doctor generally serves older, poorer patients. A _____ doctor usually works better hours and can make more money.

OVER TO YOU

Is there shortage of doctors in rural areas in your country? Would you prefer to work in the country, or in the city?

Write 5-8 sentences explaining your answer.

ANSWER KEY

1. in the country
2. doctor
3. to teach them
4. there aren't enough doctors in rural areas
5. true
6. University of Kansas
7. "They say, 'You know, I really have every intention of coming back to rural Kansas,' but they meet a soul mate, they get married, their soul mate happens to be from a big city and we never see them again. They get captured in the big city.
8. Salina; about 50,000 people
9. students' own answers [One reason she chose the Salina program is because of the size. There are only eight students -- the smallest medical school in the country. Classes are taught by professors in Salina or on a video link from Kansas City or Wichita.

CLAIRE HINRICHSEN: "I really like it. I know everybody in my class. We are close and it's a nice feeling. I went to KU, so I went to a big school, and I'm getting back to the small feel. I like it a lot.]
10. rural, city