

3.2b Dental Residents

The UMEC has sponsored 70 rural rotations for 70 general practice residencies for dentists from the University of Utah from 2008 to 2018. Of note, these residents have all served in the rural underserved area of Montezuma Creek, Utah. With an estimated 10 dentists practicing in all of San Juan County, these residents have provided an invaluable contribution to the oral health of this community.

3.2c Pharmacy Students

The UMEC has funded 284 pharmacy students to do 313 rotations from 2009 to 2018. Currently, 4 sites make up the majority (52.7%) of all pharmacy student rotations: St. George (37), Blanding (57), Cedar City (34), and Mt. Pleasant (37). Additionally, 93.9% of all pharmacy students have come from the University of Utah.

3.2d Physician Assistants

The UMEC has funded 182 physician assistants to participate in 273 rotations. Just over half (52.0%) of these rotations have been in Green River, Cedar City and St. George. While the majority of other students and residents participating in the UMEC's rural rotation program come from the University of Utah, PAs differ with over two thirds of participants coming from other schools (66.7%).

SECTION 4: FUTURE IMPORTANCE OF RURAL ROTATION PROGRAM

4.1 PHYSICIANS

The UMEC's rural rotation program is structured to help train, familiarize, and provide incentive for individuals to pursue a career in rural communities in Utah. Family Medicine residents that completed a UMEC rotation chose to practice in a rural Utah setting after graduation 8.5% of the time. Less medical residents are participating in the rural rotation program as evidenced by becoming the third largest group sponsored. In 2016, medical residents were the largest participants but have since been surpassed by pharmacists and physician assistants. Physicians play a vital role in rural healthcare and additional action to obtain more medical resident participation may be needed.

4.2 RURAL WORKFORCE RETIREMENT OVER NEXT DECADE

The UMEC's data on different healthcare workforces can help illuminate retirement patterns of each workforce by county. This self-reported data is crucial for helping to project retirement and prepare for any adverse projections in these already underserved communities. Based on UMEC's workforce reports⁶, roughly 30% of healthcare providers from the 20 rural counties with UMEC sponsored rural rotation sites in 2016 expect to retire over the next decade.

4.3 AGING RURAL POPULATION IN UTAH

Older age cohorts typically have a higher demand for healthcare services on average, relative to their younger counterparts. Demand for health services can be expected to increase as the proportion of the rural community elderly cohort increases. An aging population can impose additional demand on the local health system, and by doing so, worsen any medical personnel shortages that may already exist. The population of those aged 60 and older in rural counties is projected to increase in the next ten years⁷, thereby possibly causing an increased demand on a smaller workforce.

4.4 MOVING FORWARD

The UMEC's rural rotation program will continue to provide necessary healthcare professionals to underserved areas in order to provide necessary services as well as influence some practitioners into selecting practice settings in rural and underserved Utah after graduating. As the population continues to age, and individuals retire from the rural workforce, the need to replace and grow these workforces becomes a more challenging and important task.

⁶ The UMEC produces different workforce analyses for varying healthcare professionals and asks about retirement plans. These reports can be seen at <http://www.utahmec.org/publications.php>.

⁷ Utah's Long-term Demographic and Economic Projections. *Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute*. University of Utah. 7 Dec. 2017. <http://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/Kem-C.-Gardner-County-Detail-Document.pdf>.

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Montezuma Creek



Montezuma Creek Dental Clinic is a Community Health Center located in Montezuma Creek, a wide spot in the road in the four corners area of Utah, on the Navajo Indian Reservation. The clinic is a recently remodeled, six-chair clinic and residents work with a full range of dental auxiliary staff.

Working with [Brian Olsen, DDS](http://medicine.utah.edu/faculty/mddetail.php?facultyID=u0861527) for one month, residents see a minimum of eight patients per day, ten hours a day, four days a week (Monday through Thursday) leaving Friday, Saturday, and Sunday to tour the Indian ruins, visit the natural wonders of Canyonlands National Park and Arches National Park, as well as hike or bike in Moab and the surrounding areas. River rafting on the Green River in Moab or on the San Juan River in Bluff is fun and relaxing, or exciting, depending on the time of year.

We provide rent-free housing for residents in Blanding, approximately 25 minutes by car from the Clinic. The house has three bedrooms and is fully furnished. The town of Blanding does not have a traffic light but does have two grocery stores, a community pool and a video store. Residents tell us they enjoy their time working in the

Montezuma Creek Dental Clinic.

Message from Brian Olsen, DDS
Chief of Teaching Services
Utah Navajo Health Systems

Email [Brian Olsen, DDS \(mailto:bolsen@unhsinc.org\)](mailto:bolsen@unhsinc.org)



"Utah Navajo Health System provides services to approximately 13,000 people. We provide dental services in three community health center locations: Montezuma Creek Community Health Center, Monument Valley Community Health Center, and Blanding Family Practice. At the Montezuma Creek Health Center there are 6 Operatories, 1 Hygienist, and 6 Dental Assistants. At the Monument Valley Health Center there are 6 Operatories, 1 Hygienist, and 6 Dental Assistants. At Blanding Family Practice there are 3 Operatories, 1 Hygienist, and 2 Dental Assistants. Our patients are as unique as our clinic; some living without running water, phones, or even electricity. The average annual family income is roughly \$13,000 and, amazingly, we still have a large number of patients who speak little to no English.



"This area provides many unique experiences with the culture and the environment. The Navajo culture maintains many beliefs and rituals that have existed for hundreds of years. This area is also an incredible area for geology, archeology, and biology. There are many outdoor activities in the area ranging from hiking to rafting.