Appalachia & Appalachian Health: Quick Facts

The Appalachian region stretches from southern New York to northern Mississippi by way of the Appalachian Mountains, and includes all or part of 13 states: New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.¹

Unique features include:

- A shared culture, with Appalachians reporting health as a valuable commodity² and self-reliance and traditional lifeways said to be of utmost importance¹
- ~67% of Appalachian counties are rural⁴ as compared to ~21% of U.S. counties⁵
- Poverty rates exceed national averages (15.4% v. 13.5%)⁶
- Appalachian residents face a disproportionately high amount of poor health:
  - More likely to report diabetes, heart disease, and stroke, particularly in distressed counties⁷⁻⁸
  - Death rates related to coronary heart disease exceed national averages by 15-21%⁹
  - Death rates related to stroke exhibit rate ratios of 1.1-1.3, with the general U.S. serving as the reference group¹⁰
  - Cancer death rates exceed national levels (166.7 per 100,000 population) in both rural Appalachia (176.3) and all of Appalachia (173.1)¹¹
- Barriers to enhancement of health include:
  - Health professional shortage¹²
  - Less commercial health insurance coverage¹³
  - Fear, lack of knowledge, and distrust of the medical system¹⁴

¹ Retrieved from: http://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/MapofAppalachia.asp
References