A Rural Predicament

As a rural community, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan faces a critical lack of preventative healthcare. Many of the Upper Peninsula’s residents rarely ever attend a doctor’s visit unless they are forced to do so by a serious illness or injury. This means that these people are at a constant risk of being struck down suddenly by potentially serious diseases that could have been detected and prevented with proper screenings and checkups. The unfortunate truth of the matter is that the people of the Upper Peninsula lack the finances and/or insurance required to pay for regular doctor’s visits and checkups. In addition, even if they could pay, oftentimes they live in remote rural areas, hours from the nearest hospital.

The latter obstacle has perhaps the most straightforward solution. If the Upper Peninsula had a more robust public transport system, people could attend their doctor’s appointments more easily. The state could offer free or reduced bus fare for those that require medical attention, as well as extend bus routes to accommodate the most rural areas. This system would open preventative healthcare to hundreds of our citizens who would otherwise face great difficulty so much as getting to a clinic.

Another solution that will solve both the financial and transportation problems would be an extension of home care. Allocating more resources into enabling nurses and physicians to visit patients in their home would not only allow people to stay home, it would also cut down on healthcare costs, as patients will utilize fewer resources if they are not in a hospital. Seeing as routine checkups generally require minimal equipment and manpower, a single professional could easily perform these tasks while patients remain in the comfort of their own homes.

While these solutions would greatly increase the availability of preventative healthcare to Upper Peninsula residents, they present their own obstacles. Extended home health care would require the availability of medical personnel to make house calls, and seeing as the Upper Peninsula has a lack of such personnel, this would likely require additional programs to encourage medical professionals to move to the area or for current residents to join the medical field. There is also the question of expense. Either of these systems I have proposed would require greater funds to be made available to Upper Peninsula hospitals, likely from state or federal grants. It would take a fair amount of petitioning in order to receive these funds, however this is a small price to pay. As healthcare professionals, the well-being of our fellow human beings is our utmost priority; logistical issues such as price and manpower must not halt us in the pursuit of this goal.