

Janice C. Probst, PhD^{1,2}; Selina Hunt McKinney, PhD, APRN, PMHNP-BC^{1,3}; Susan Outen, MN, RN^{1,3}; Whitney Zahnd, PhD^{1,2}; Eboni Haynes, MSPH, MBA^{1,2}

¹Rural & Minority Health Research Center, University of South Carolina; ²Department of Health Services Policy and Management, University of South Carolina; ³College of Nursing, University of South Carolina

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

- The Institute of Medicine has called for fullest use of nursing capacity to lead the transformation of the health care system following passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).¹
- Retaining nurses is essential to ensure health care access and reduce the health disparities that persist in rural populations.² Both policy planners and local facility administrators benefit from understanding the contributors both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among registered nurses.³⁻⁴
- Limited research has assessed rural-urban differences in job satisfaction across levels of training and broad practice settings.

Purpose

To examine three issues among registered nurses (RNs)—particularly ambulatory care nurses: 1) perceived barriers and facilitators to nursing practice; 2) job satisfaction; and 3) self-identified challenges in nursing work environments and patient care.

METHODS

- Survey Topics:**
 - Self-identification of rural, suburban, or urban residence and practice location;
 - Demographic characteristics;
 - Educational background;
 - Frequency of barriers to nursing practice (e.g. resource availability, training, bureaucracy, etc.);
 - Satisfaction with job tasks and work environment (e.g. paperwork, administrative support, etc.)
- Survey Dissemination:**
 - Thomas Data provided a targeted list of RNs and advanced practice RNs and their contact information (n=4,214 valid e-mails).
 - An initial survey was sent in Aug. 2018 and 3 follow-up surveys were sent between Sept. and Nov. 2018.
 - A total of 435 nurses completed the survey (10.3% response rate).
- Survey Analysis:**
 - Continuous variables across rural-suburban-urban categories were assessed using analysis of variance (ANOVA).
 - Categorical variables were assessed using chi-square test for independence; frequencies and percentages were reported.

RESULTS

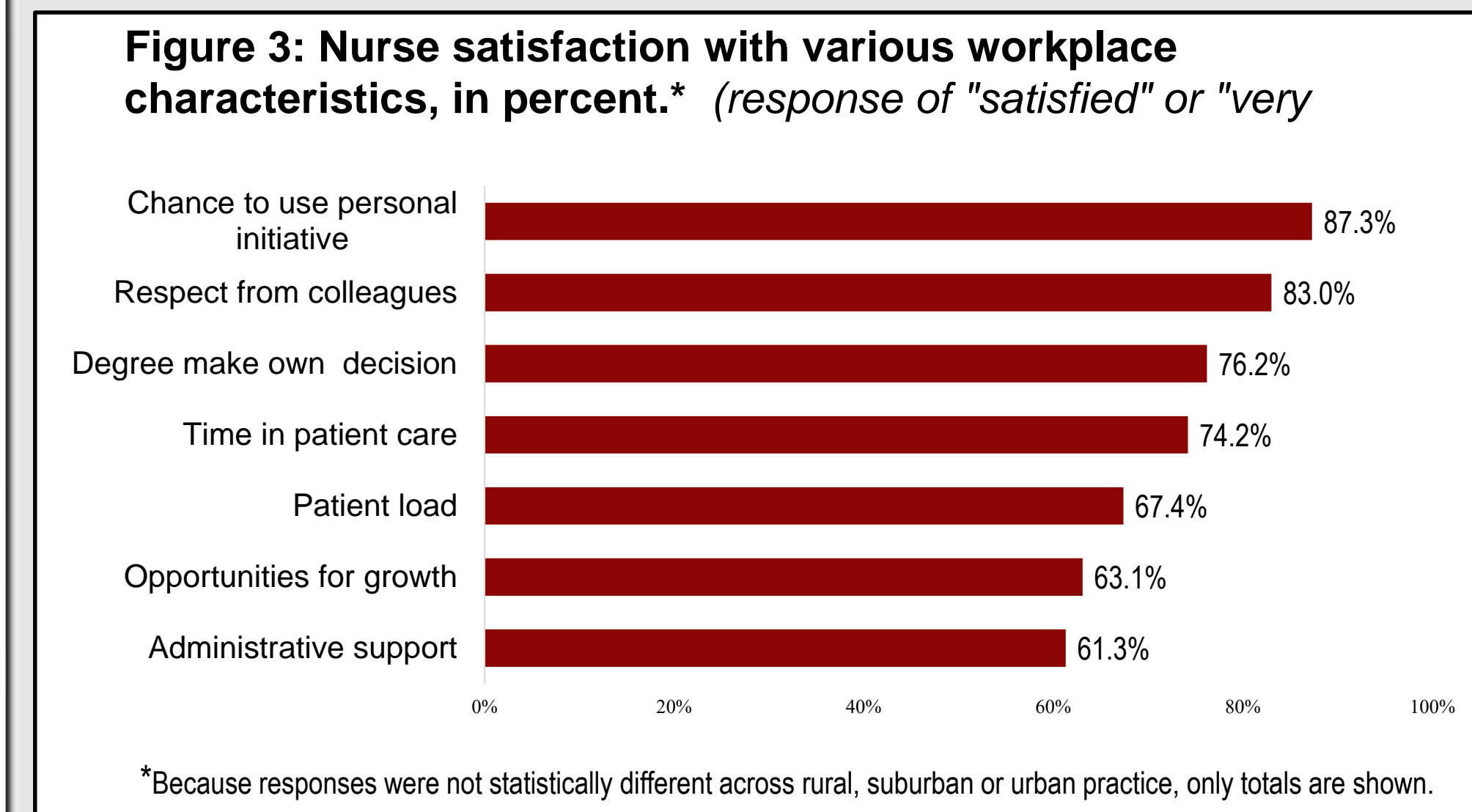
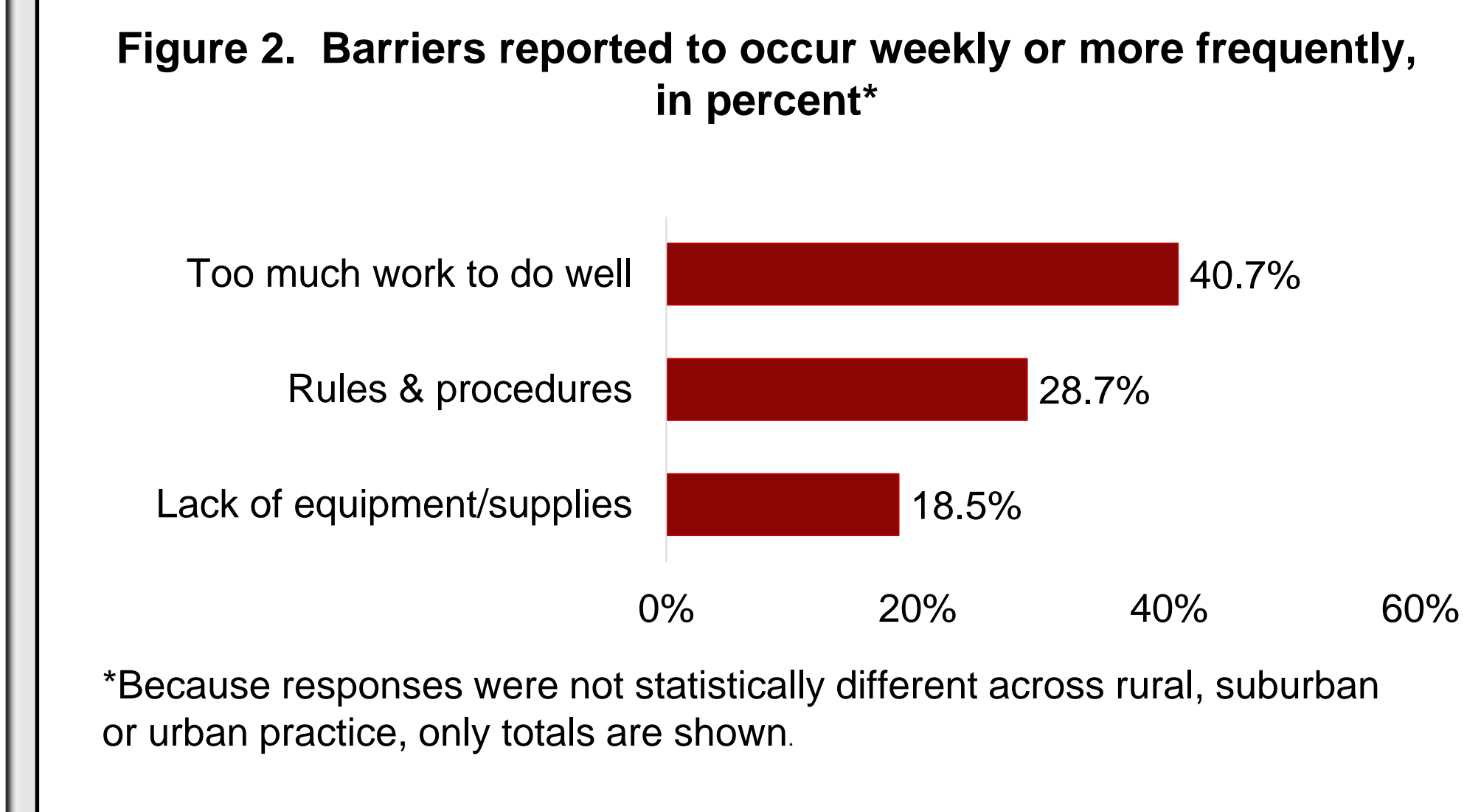
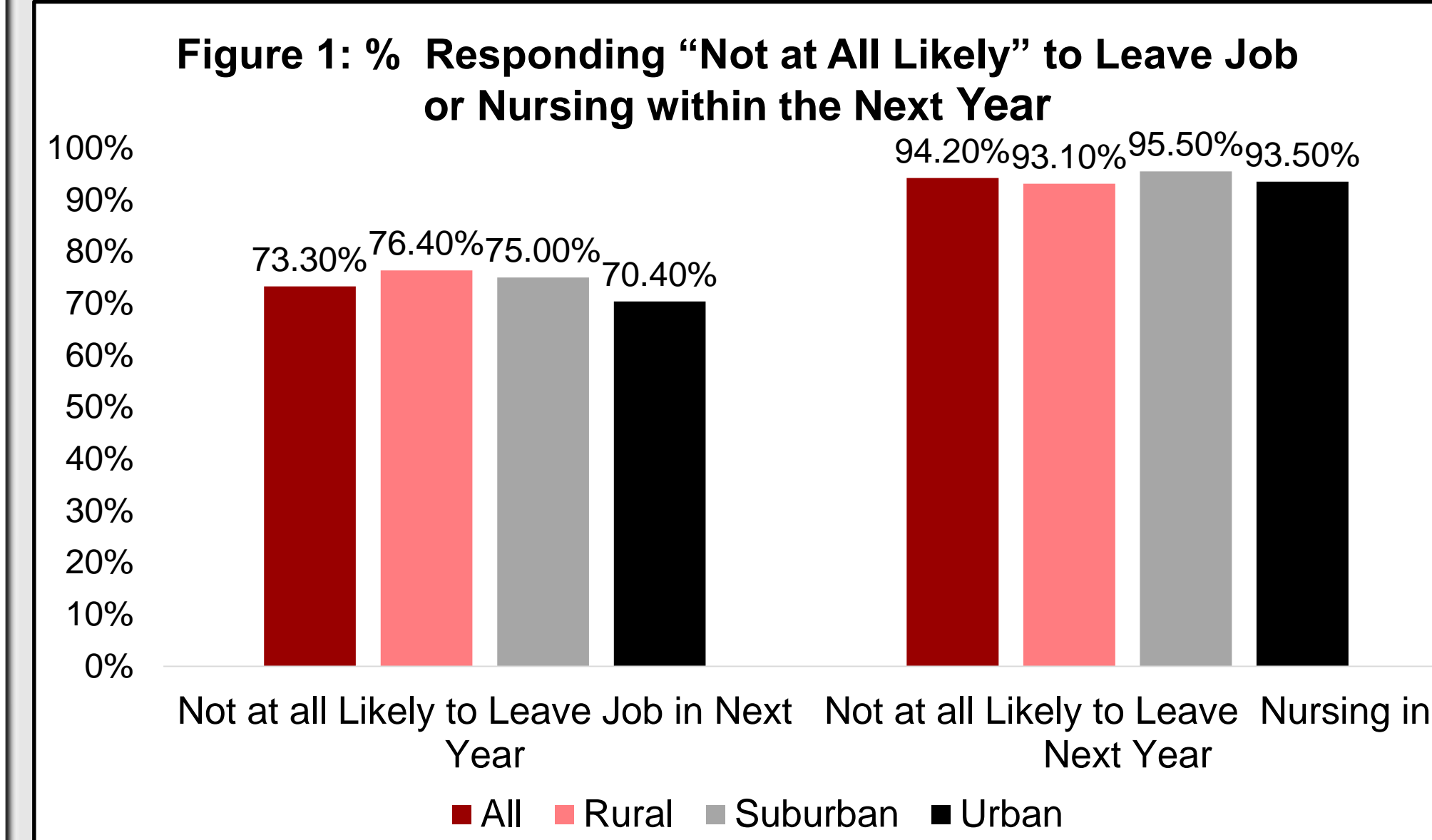


Table 1: Educational Training and Perceived Education Preparation, by Rurality of Practice Site

	All (n=435)	Rural (n=72)	Suburban (n=177)	Urban (n=186)	P-value for differences by location
	%	%	%	%	
Highest Nursing Degree					
Diploma in Nursing	6.2	11.1	6.2	4.3	
Associate's in Nursing	14.0	11.1	15.3	14.0	
BSN	33.8	27.8	28.8	40.9	0.004
MSN	32.6	40.3	40.1	22.6	
PhD/DNP	5.5	2.8	4.5	7.5	
Other	7.8	6.9	5.1	10.8	
Nursing education has equipped me for work, yes	93.1	84.7	94.9	94.6	0.009

Key Findings

- Most nurses were satisfied their profession and their jobs. The majority anticipated staying in nursing (94.2%), and remaining at their current job (73.3%).
- Nurses in rural settings were less likely to report that their nursing education had equipped them for work than nurses in suburban or urban practices (84.7% versus 94.9% and 94.6%, respectively; p = 0.009).
- Nurses in rural settings were more likely to report that inadequate training was a barrier to their ability to do their job (33.3% versus 18.2% and 28.5% for suburban and urban nurses, respectively; p = 0.03).
- Whether analyzed as BSN versus lower or MSN versus lower levels, education was not linked to perceptions of inadequate training or inadequate educational preparation (no statistically significant differences).

DISCUSSION

- Key elements of job satisfaction and barriers to practice were not different for nurses in rural, suburban and urban settings.
- Gaps in perceived adequacy of preparation for current practice experienced by rural nurses were not associated with differences in educational preparation and may stem from clinical challenges unique to rural care settings.
- Further research is needed to identify educational needs among rural nurses and to determine the most effective policy or training changes to better prepare rural nurses for their role.

REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Committee on the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Initiative on the Future of Nursing, at the Institute of Medicine. The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health. 2010. National Academies Press, Washington D.C.
- Bae SH. Nurse practitioners' job satisfaction in rural versus nonrural areas. *J Am Assoc Nurse Pract.* 2016; 28 (9):471-478.
- Ricketts TC. Workforce issues in rural areas: a focus on policy equity. *Am J Public Health.* 2005; 95(1): 42-48.
- Baernholdt M, Mark BA. The nurse work environment, job satisfaction and turnover rates in rural and urban nursing units. *J Nurs Manag.* 2009; 17(8):994-1001.

This work was supported by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, Health Resources and Services Administration, Grant No. U1CRH03711.

For more information about the Rural and Minority Health Research Center, contact the Director Dr. Jan M. Eberth (JMEBERTH@MAILBOX.SC.EDU) or Deputy Director Dr. Elizabeth L. Crouch (CROUCHEL@MAILBOX.SC.EDU).