

When You Need It and Where It's Convenient for You...

“A
*perspective on healthcare services in a small
community.*”

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Not long ago, I was driving through my home town in rural Maine. I noticed there were two new physical therapy clinics in town. At first, this was quite surprising to me, noting that Fryeburg, Maine is a town of only 1,500 people. Why would we need two therapy clinics? After all, this is a border town (Maine/New Hampshire) and is the location of the only grocery store in the area. The population, like that of Central Illinois, is made up of hard working people who experience the usual muscle aches and pains and the occasional sprains and strains associated with physically demanding jobs. People in small towns are in need of therapy services just as they are everywhere. So why should they have to drive up to an hour to receive these services? Why wouldn't a small town have two therapy clinics to serve the community and the residents of the surrounding area?

Today, I find myself in a very similar situation. I'm a Physical Therapist working in a small community which has retail outlets, restaurants, entertainment, and service establishments that meet the basic needs of the immediate area. Considering the time and expense to drive to a larger metro area, locate parking and then drive home again, many have found that their community can provide all the conveniences and services equal to that of the big city. This is often true with basic healthcare services. You can often discover quality services, provided by knowledgeable professionals, close to home.

Having worked in a number of therapy practices with high volume caseloads, I really didn't get to know my patients. Now, in a smaller community clinic setting, I'm able to spend more time with patients, allowing me the opportunity to get to know them, not just treat them. I find, more often than not, patients exhibit better attitudes and greater motivation towards their therapy when we have an opportunity to really get to know them and they get to know us. We have patients who, at time of discharge, ask if they could stop by from time to time just to visit.

Not only do patients enjoy participating in therapy to a greater degree, they also see people they know from their community. They often turn their therapy session into a social outing, catching up on all the local gossip. Recently, we had a patient who wanted to schedule her therapy appointments close to the time her friend had therapy. She would then show up an hour early just to sit and chat with her friend until her therapy session started. This kind of “down home” atmosphere is often difficult to find in a larger metro area.

So your asking what is the point of all this? If you or a family member is in need of therapy (physical, occupational, or speech therapy), or any other medical service for that matter, consider your local community before venturing off to the big city. You may be surprised to learn what's available. Ask your friends and neighbors what their personal experiences have been with the local services. In a small town, chances are there is someone you know who has used the service. Keep in mind however, that for most medically related situations, your doctor is in the

best position to advise you on what services you need and where they can best be delivered to you. So when your doctor recommends therapy or other healthcare services, do not hesitate to ask about the local providers. See what they have to offer for your medical or rehabilitative needs. You may find the small town atmosphere, “where everyone knows your name”, is just what the doctor ordered.

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