

# Health communities: theory and practice

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The community I have chosen is the city of Rowland Heights California, where I reside. This city is located in Los Angeles County but borders Orange and San Bernardino Counties. Rowland Heights is in the Pacific Time Zone and sits at 525-feet above sea level. The city is 9.02 square miles with 5,380.70 residents per square mile. At the time the 2000 census data was collected, the total population was 48,553 residents. According to City Data (2010) the median household income in 2009 was \$67,042, the median detached home value was \$527,392, and the cost of living index was 130.2. Rowland Heights reports that 5.0% of residents have incomes 50% below the poverty level, and an unemployment rate of 5.3% (City Data, 2010). About 49.2% of the population is female and 50.8% is male. 82.1% of the population in the city has at least a high school diploma. Of residents 25 age and older, 33.3% have a bachelor's degree, and 10.9% hold a graduate or professional degree (City Data, 2010). More than 50% of the population is married and the average household size is 3.4 people (City Data, 2010). Community Aspects Affecting Health More than 20% of the residents are 15 years or younger and about 15% fall in the category of 16-24 years.

I have identified several areas of concern that can affect the health of the community. Obesity is one of these areas of concern. Rowland Heights has an adult obesity rate of 20.4% and a diabetes rate of 7.9% (City Data, 2010). According to Active Diner (2010) there are 16 fast food restaurants in the city. Poor air quality is another area of concern. According to City Data (2010, p. 1) Rowland Heights is in a county that was #1 in the "Top 101 counties with the highest Ozone (1-hour) air pollution reading", #3 with the "

highest Ozone (8-hour) pollution reading”, and #5 with the “ highest Nitrogen Dioxide air pollution reading” in 2005.

Another aspect of this community identified that can affect health is the potential for injury from motor vehicle accidents and violent crimes. Many of the younger population in Rowland Heights speed, they race each other sometimes in the middle of the day. On December 4, 2010, a 20-year-old female was killed when one of two men street racing lost control of his car (Los Angeles Times, 2009). The city is also home to 28 registered sex offenders with charges ranging from lewd conduct with a child under 14 years, to attempted rape, and sexual battery (City Data, 2010).

According to CLR Search (2010) in the 2009 crime risk index, Rowland Heights had a murder risk of almost twice the national average and a motor vehicle theft risk 50% higher than the national average, while personal crime and robbery were equal to the national average. Rape, assault, and burglary risks were assessed at less than half the national average (CLR, 2010).

Healthy People 2020 Health Indicator The Healthy People 2020 health indicator I have chosen is overweight and obesity. My area of specialty is emergency nursing. Patients arrive on a daily seeking medical treatment for health conditions related to obesity.

Many suffer from chronic diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, kidney failure, and strokes. Some diseases are related to genetic factors, whereas others are individual behavior determinants, such as diet, and exercise (Healthy People, 2010). A nursing role to affect this indicator is focusing on modifying individual behaviors,

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such as increasing physical activity, and following a proper diet. These simple changes can help prevent, and reduce the incidence of many chronic conditions, therefore “ increasing the quality and years of healthy life” (Nevada Public, 2010, p. ).

Definitions Community According to Stanhope and Lancaster (2008, p. 192) “ A community is defined as a social network of interacting individuals, usually concentrated in a defined territory. ” A community is determined by geographical boundaries, members interact with each other, and share common interest and values (Stanhope & Lancaster, 2008). According to Stanhope and Lancaster (2008) society is composed of many types of communities such as neighborhood and face-to-face communities in which interactions occur within a specific geographical area.

Communities not limited to geographical areas are known as special interest or resource communities. These types of communities share general interest, for example, environmental concerns, or political views. Community Health Community health identifies common needs in the community and provides solutions for modifying behaviors for community members. According to Stanhope and Lancaster (2008, p. 347) the term community health is “ the meeting of collective needs by identifying problems and managing behaviors within the community itself and between the community and the larger society.

According to Stanhope and Lancaster (2008) community health involves biological, emotional, and social aspects. The biological aspects are measured in terms of “ morbidity and mortality rates, life expectancy

indexes, and risk factor profiles” (Stanhope & Lancaster, 2008, p. 345).

Emotional aspects are measured in terms of mental health, while crime rates and levels of function define the social aspects (Stanhope & Lancaster, 2008). Community structure is defined in terms of services and resources available to the members, such as providers and health agencies (Stanhope & Lancaster, 2008).

Community as a Client “ The community is the client only when the nursing focus is on the collective or common good of the populations instead of on individual health” (Stanhope & Lancaster, 2008, p. 344). According to Stanhope and Lancaster (2008) care is provided to individuals and families because changes in their health, such as smoking, obesity, and abuse affects the health of their community. The goal is to improve the health of the entire community. Though nurses work with individuals and families, the changes are deliberately meant to affect the entire community.

Changes often occur in levels with involvement spanning from individual members to entire societies (Stanhope & Lancaster, 2008). Survey of Rowland Heights Housing and Zoning The housing in Rowland Heights includes single-family dwellings, attached townhomes, condominiums, and apartments. The homes are constructed of wood frames with stucco exteriors. Architectural styles vary and consist of ranch, Spanish, Mediterranean, and California style bungalows. Many of the homes were constructed in the 1950s and range up to early 2000. Lot sizes range from 5,000 square feet to five-acre parcels. Some homes are zoned as horse property.

All single-family dwellings include front and back yards. Housing includes custom and track homes in gated and non-gated communities. According to the 2000 census data, Rowland Heights had 14, 548 housing units, a total of 4, 814 units were renter-occupied and 9, 367 units were owner occupied (E-podunk, 2007). Open Space The homes in Rowland Heights are in excellent condition; they are well maintained with fresh paint and manicured lawns. The neighborhood includes tree-lined sidewalks, well-kept streets, and large front, and back yards. Lawns are decorated with shrubs, flowerbeds, and hard scape designs.

The city has seven public parks of various sizes. All parks include playgrounds, barbeque, and picnic areas. Some of the larger parks have tennis and basketball courts, soccer and baseball fields, and clubhouses, or gazebos. Boundaries The city has signs welcoming visitors and residents into the community. All street signs are labeled with the street and name of the city. There are no natural boundaries; however, there are two freeways and one railway dividing three neighboring cities. The city has no industrial units, only commercial, and privately owned businesses. Commons

Neighborhood commons vary according to the age of residents. Middle aged and older adults enjoy the use of two public golf courses, two gyms, a restaurant row, and many cafes. Teens visit the Puente Hills Mall, which has more than 100 shops, a food court, and a movie theater with 20 screens. Adjacent to the mall is the Malibu Speed Zone, which includes formula-one racecars, miniature golf, arcade games, and a restaurant. The younger residents visit community parks, the library, or play at the neighborhood

McDonald's. Transportation Foothill Transit, MTA transit service, and the Metro link commuter train provide public transportation.

In addition, just eight miles away, in the city of Fullerton is an Amtrak station. According to the 2000 census data, more than 90% of residents drive privately owned vehicles, and 2.8% use public transportation (City Data, 2010). The city of Rowland Heights is in the Northeast portion of Los Angeles County bordering Orange and San Bernardino counties. Three major freeways are within a few miles of any section of the city. Service Centers Several chiropractic, private doctors offices, pharmacies, massage establishments, and beauty salons provide services to the community.

A United States post office, one UPS store, and a privately owned postal annex provide mailing services. The city has a Korean and a Chinese senior center, an Alzheimer's Center, and along with two adult daycare centers, provide services for the elderly in the community. According to Childcare Center (2010) Rowland Heights has 12 preschools and child development centers, and 14 family operated day-care facilities. Seven elementary, an intermediate, a continuation, a special education, and two public high schools provide general education for the cities' minors.

Seven colleges, including four community colleges, and four major universities are located just 15 miles of the city limits. Eighteen bank branches and three hotels provide additional service for the city residents and visitors. Stores and Street People Rowland Heights provides the residents with a Vons, Albertsons, Stater Brothers, and 99 Ranch Market in which to shop in. Many smaller, independently owned, and commercial chain

convenient stores are scattered throughout the city. A Costco, Sams Club where house, and a large auto mall are on the border of Rowland Heights and City of Industry, they provide additional services to the community.

Most residents travel by vehicle and bicycle but some prefer to walk. In the evenings many of the community members walk their pets, jog, or push children in strollers. Stray animals and homeless individuals are rare in this city, and if seen, they usually are just passing by. Signs of Decay No abandoned homes or cars are seen, graffiti on buildings is rare, and trash littered lots in the city do not exist. Occasionally real estate, political, missing pets, or yard sale signs can be found in front yards, windows, bus benches, or telephone posts. Race and Ethnicity

More than 50% of the residents in Rowland Heights are of Asian descent. Hispanics follow at a close second at 34. 5% (City Data, 2010). Caucasians-White make up about 11. 8% of the population, more than 1. 4% are Black, 0. 04% are American Indian, 0. 2% Pacific Islander, 1. 5% are Bi-racial, and more than 0. 1% fall into the category of other (City Data, 2010). The primary language spoken is English, but other languages heard are Spanish, Korean, and Chinese. Many businesses, such as restaurants, banks, and independently owned stores have their names advertised in English and Korean.

Religion and Politics According to City Data (2010) 69% of the population in Rowland Heights is Roman Catholic, 11% are Evangelical, 14% are other, and 6% are mainline denominations. Seven churches of various denominations are in the city, including Catholic, Christian, Jehovah's Witnesses,



Presbyterian, and Methodist. Seventy percent of the registered voters in Los Angeles County voted in favor of the Democratic Party, there are no specific political demographics listed for the city of Rowland Heights (City Date, 2010). Health and Morbidity

Rowland Heights has an obesity rate of more than 20%, and an adult diabetes rate of 7.9% (City Data, 2010). Numerous fast food establishments and cafes can be seen throughout the city. No apparent evidence of chronic diseases, mental health illness, drug and alcohol addiction, or communicable diseases is seen. Two hospitals are within seven miles of city limits, and three additional hospitals are within 15 miles. Media Most homes have cable, or satellite dish service, but a few outdoor television antennas can be seen on the roofs of older homes.

Seven local channels and more than 100 paid cable and satellite channels are available to those who subscribe. A strong signal is available in the area for most AM and FM radio stations to be heard clearly. Many residents subscribe to the Los Angeles Times, the Orange County Register, or receive the Highlander, a free local newspaper distributed weekly throughout the city. Many grocery and liquor stores carry a variety of magazines and publications, which the residents can purchase. Television appears to be one the most popular forms of media choices for the community. Conclusion Rowland Heights is a very nice place to live.

The climate is mild with temperatures ranging from the mid-40s' to the high 90s' depending on the time of the year. It borders three counties, offers easy access to three major interstate highways, and several freeways. The

community is located 4.2 miles away from a city with a population of 50,000+, 6.3 miles away from a city with a population of 200,000+, and 28.8 miles away from a city with a population of 100,000+ (City Data, 2010).

Rowland Heights offers the residents a clean, peaceful, family oriented place to live. The potential risks assessed in this community compare to the national average.

## References

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