



# Obstructing Factors Affecting Access to Healthcare in Rural South Texas Colonias- Culturally, Economically, and Physically



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## Objective

- Along the border of southern Texas and Mexico, there are a series of unincorporated communities called colonias. These communities have documented structural issues that prevent the community members from adequate access to healthcare<sup>1</sup>.
- Although current research has been able to identify the structural issues and the underdeveloped conditions of the colonias, it has failed to recognize other factors such as financial and cultural barriers. Also, there is a lack of research on how these factors impact the colonias' resident's ability to access healthcare.
- Thus through this research, we plan to identify what are the major factors inhibiting care (geography, culture, finances, quality of care) and what other factors are affected by this lack of healthcare (employment, families, community, education, etc.).
- To collect this data, an anonymous survey will be distributed to the people living in Colonias to gather information on the specific needs of their community.
- Using the gathered data, future research can be conducted to determine the most beneficial community intervention to alleviate these issues.

## Methods

- A survey will be delivered through the Qualtrics survey software.
- The survey will consist of questions on general health, proximity to healthcare facilities, cultural self-identification, personal finances, and about health services in their community.
- In the survey, mixed methods of qualitative questions, such as open ended questions, and quantitative questions, such as rating scales, will be used to provide a more holistic, but still analyzable, set of data.
- In the survey, the participants will have the opportunity to respond freely, using opened ended questions, about healthcare issues within their community. This allows us to better understand the perspectives and personal experiences of community members.
- We will analyze the survey using descriptive and qualitative methods to identify inhibiting factors of healthcare and explore solutions that the community members feel would best serve them.

## Background Information

- The effects from limited access to healthcare in the Colonias of South Texas not only affect an individual and their family, but also the community they live in. The main known effects include increased rates of preventable diseases, low employment rates, and a lack of health education<sup>2,9</sup>.
- Issues regarding race, transportation, literacy, environmental factors, low employment rates, and insurance coverage are the leading issues in limited healthcare access<sup>6,8</sup>.

Author and Year	Critical Findings
Rural Health Information Hub. (2011)	One of the biggest factors to the health of the community is health literacy <sup>2</sup> . Health literacy is the "degree to which patients understand basic health information such as following instructions from a healthcare provider, managing a chronic illness, or taking medication properly" <sup>2</sup> .
	There is a significant lack of healthcare coverage in rural areas for people living in the Colonias due to limited options through occupations, and overall low financial income <sup>2</sup> .
	Living in a rural area in South Texas, colonias especially, have an increased chance of being exposed to pesticides, chemicals, air pollution, diseases, and animal waste <sup>2</sup> .
University of Texas System Texas-Mexico Border Health Coordination Office	Diseases such as Hepatitis A, Salmonellosis, Shigellosis, and Tuberculosis are caused by poor water and sanitation services, and occur at a higher rate in the Colonias of South Texas than the other counties in the area <sup>9</sup> .
Health Disparities in Rural Women.	Racial minorities, women seeking pre/postnatal care experience greater barriers when seeking healthcare <sup>6</sup>
Rural Health Information Hub. (2019)	People with low socioeconomic status experience greater barriers accessing health care <sup>8</sup> .

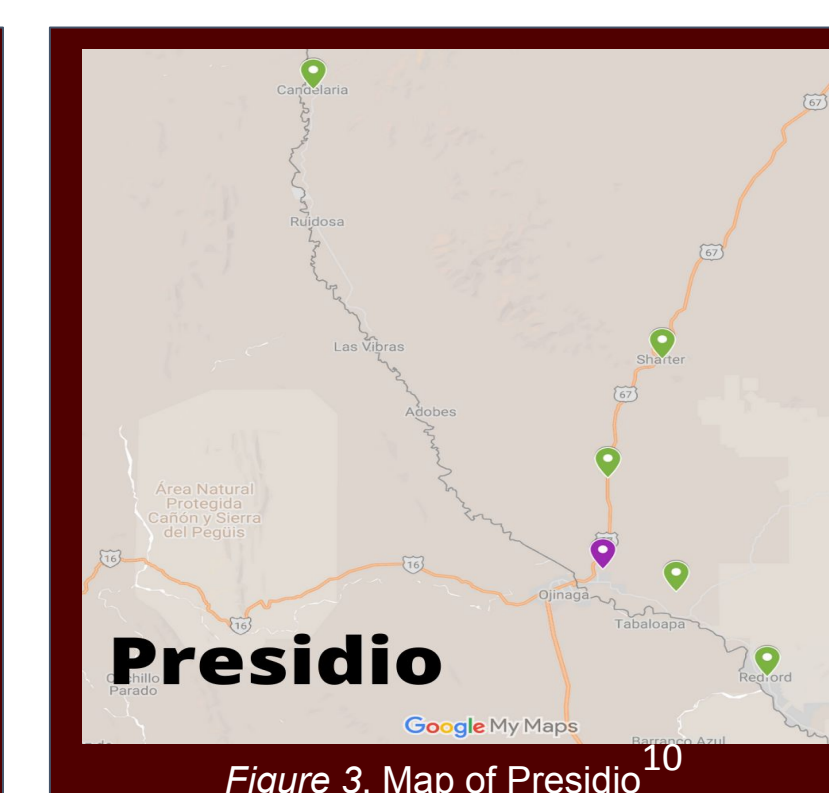
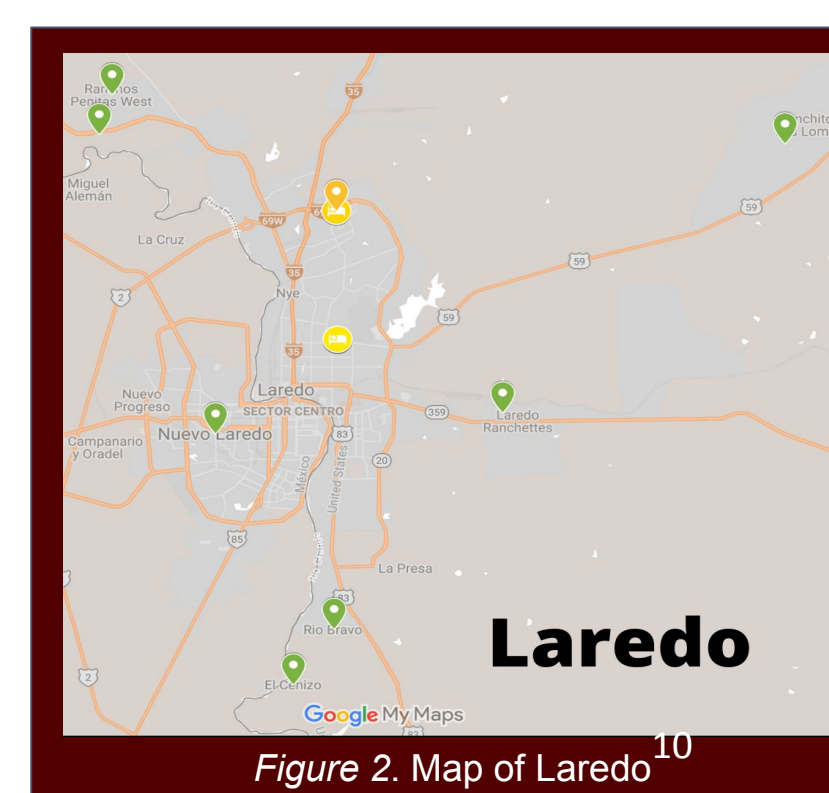
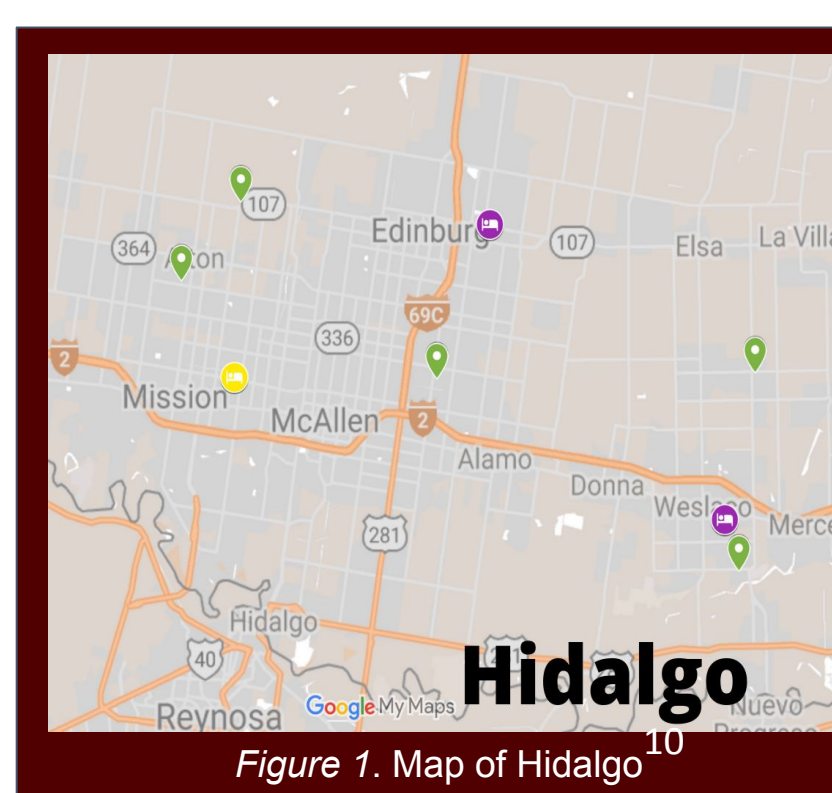
Table 1. Major Literature Findings

- The average distance from the colonias to the nearest healthcare facility varies greatly among cities. The range of averages is partly caused by the ratio of healthcare facilities to number of colonias in that region, and how far outside the city that the colonias are.

	San Antonio	Laredo	Presidio	Hidalgo
Average Distance to Healthcare facility	1.27 miles	15.39 miles	57.42 miles	9.18 miles
Average Driving Time to Healthcare facility	4.67 minutes	23.57 minutes	59.83 minutes	14.6 minutes

Table 2. Distance to Healthcare Comparisons<sup>10</sup>

- A sampling of colonias in these three areas were mapped (green) along with the closest hospital (yellow) or medical clinic (purple) shown in figures 1-3 left.



## Conclusion

- This study is vital in order to identify the major healthcare access issues in rural areas, such as the Colonias, where access and quality of healthcare is minimal.
- The findings of this study seek to fill gaps in the literature by recognizing factors such as financial and cultural barriers and how these factors, along with infrastructure and structural issues, impact the colonias' resident's ability to access healthcare.
- This research seeks to provide data for possible solutions for these problems by attempting to understand what the most beneficial community intervention tool to alleviate these issues would be (outside organizations, mini-hospitals, primary care clinics, etc.) based on the factors identified by the residents of these areas.

TASK TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	2021												2022														
			Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May										
IRB Approval	01/2021	05/2021																											
Distribution of Surveys	05/2021	10/2021																											
Collection of Data	08/2021	12/2021																											
Interpretation of Data	12/2021	03/2022																											
Preparation for Publication	01/2022	05/2022																											

Table 3. Tentative Timeline for Completion<sup>11</sup>

## References

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