

Increasing Hospice Access in Rural Areas

MHPCA Midwest Regional Conference
on Palliative & End of Life Care

Dr. Andrew Mayo
Chief Medical Officer

ST. CROIX[®]
HOSPICE

Objectives

- Build strategies for reaching and supporting patients in rural areas
- Identify members of the interdisciplinary care team
- Leverage care team structures to increase hospice reach
- Identify methods of technology to enhance care for rural patients



Hospice

“You matter because of who you are. You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die.”

- Dame Cicely Saunders

Dr. Andrew Mayo

Chief Medical Officer (CMO)
St. Croix Hospice

- How I came to hospice
- The Mayo Family
- My role at St. Croix Hospice



The Mayo Family

Dr. Charles H. Mayo II



Dr. Charles W. Mayo



The Mayo Clinic Legacy of Person-Centered Care

- First multispecialty group practice
- Family tradition
- Family practice
- The importance of connection with patients
- The importance of each patient's story



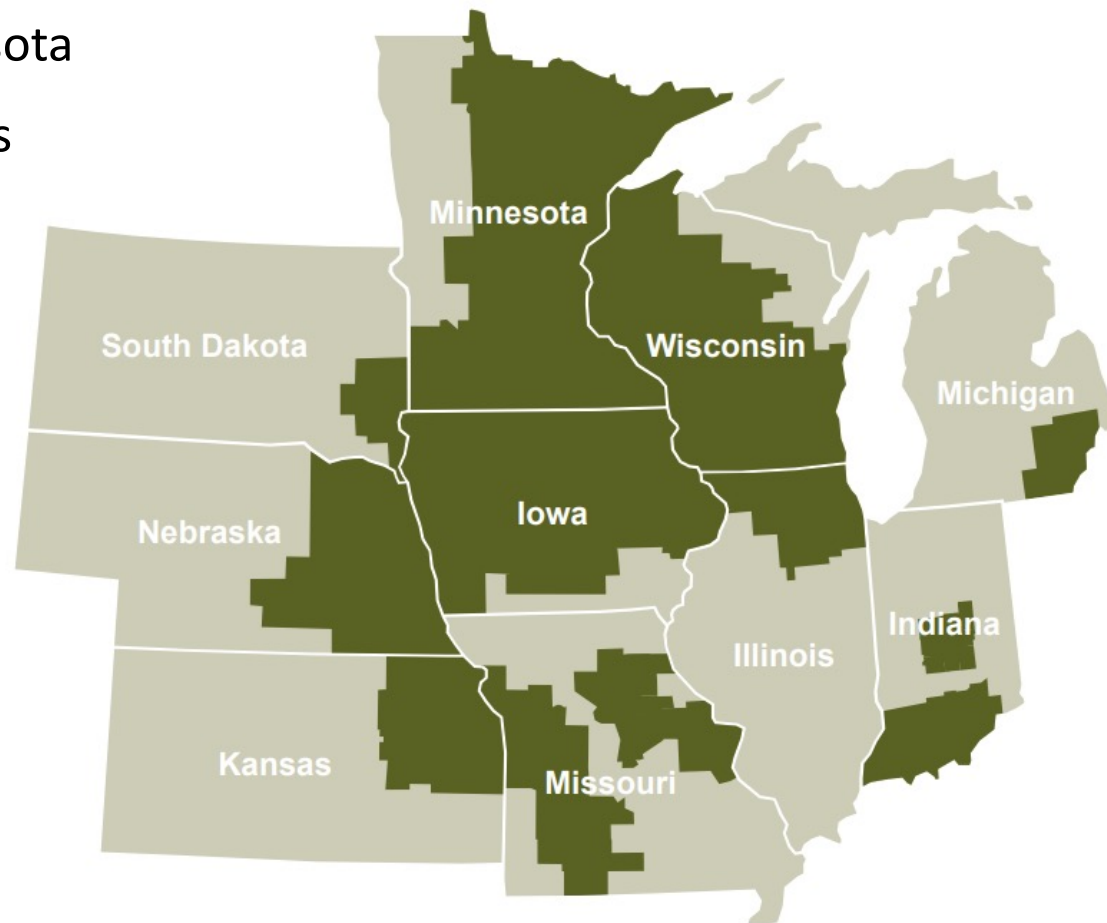
Life as a Family Doctor

- Father's influence
- Rural practice
- Called to hospice



St. Croix Hospice

- Headquartered in Minnesota
- Serving 10 Midwest states
- Approx. 1,700 employees
- More than 4,100 patients served daily
- More than 60 branches



Origin Story

Originally founded in Minnesota, St. Croix Hospice is named after the St. Croix River. Symbols of change, rivers are restless, sometimes moving swiftly and other times peaceful and nearly still. Like life, rivers are not always easy to navigate, and it's good to have a guide to get through the difficult parts.

Since 2009, St. Croix Hospice has been guiding patients and families through the hospice journey, focused on our mission of providing the highest quality hospice care.



St. Croix Hospice By The Numbers



784,624

Visits completed



1,073

Active clinical field staff



15,116

Patients served



29%

Admits after hours



3,818

Patients served daily



393

Counties served



2,904

Partner facilities



59

Active branch locations

The Rural Need for Hospice

- Number of hospices in rural areas declining, while share of rural decedents increasing¹
 - Number of rural hospices declined 0.9% between 2020 and 2021
 - In 2021, 84% of hospices were in urban areas; 16% of hospices in rural areas

¹2023 MedPac Report to Congress:
Medicare Payment Policy



Barriers to Reaching Rural Areas

- Geographic isolation; further travel time for home visits
- Staffing shortages
- Funding challenges
 - Payment mechanisms are inadequate to support programs where patient volume is low.²

²*Hospice News reference to 2015 policy brief from the Rural Health Reform Policy Research Center*



Strategies for Reaching Rural Areas

- We need solutions that make care more:
 - Efficient
 - Proximate
 - Responsive
 - Accessible
 - Innovative
- When we strategically combine **interdisciplinary care teams and technology**, we mitigate barriers to rural access and can make the most of our time and resources.



Interdisciplinary Care Team

- Medical Director/Attending Physician/Nurse Practitioner
- RN Case Manager/LPN
- Hospice Aide
- Social Worker
- Chaplain
- Bereavement
- Therapists
 - PT/OT/ST/Music/Massage/Pet
- Dieticians
- Volunteers



Interdisciplinary Care Teams

- **Leveraging interdisciplinary care through:**
 - Delegation (making efficient use of specific disciplines)
 - Regionalization of physicians
 - Round-the-clock admissions



Utilizing Common Technology

- Eliminating distance barriers by connecting care team to each other, to patients and to families
 - Equipping clinicians with laptops, tablets, cell phones
 - Virtual video communications
 - InTouch Family Connection Program
 - Voice to text charting



Proactive & Innovative Technology

- Achieving greater efficiency and increasing responsiveness through innovative tech:
 - MUSE
 - nVoq
 - Element5
 - InTouch Family Connection Program



Conclusion

- Strategic implementation of interdisciplinary care teams supports patients and staff, making rural access easier.
- Technology is key in efforts to increase efficiency and close the distance in care.
- There are common, convenient tech solutions at our fingertips.
- Innovative tech can improve efficiency, ultimately supporting staff responsiveness and accessibility in rural communities.

Thank You

ST. CROIX[®]
HOSPICE