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Fewer Cancer Specialists Practicing in Rural Areas

(KTNC) -- A national study finds cancer care in rural America is lacking and without significant changes, won't likely improve. One of the study's authors, Dr. Blase Polite, a professor of medicine at the University of Chicago, says there are too few cancer specialists in rural areas and they face an increasing number of cancer patients.

The report found nearly two-thirds of all cancer practices with one to five doctors planned to close, merge or sell in the next year because a lot of the cost pressures.

The study finds seven in ten counties nationwide don't have a cancer specialist, and while 20-percent of Americans live in rural areas, only three-percent of oncologists are located in rural areas.

Dr. Polite says one of the downsides to increasing longevity is that as people live longer, more will be diagnosed with cancer. He says the fear is that some patients in rural areas will simply give up because of the uphill fight to get treatment in a far-away city.

Polite is a member of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, which put out the report, "The State of Cancer Care in America: 2014." Learn more at the website: www.asco.org.

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