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Q: The COVID-19 crisis has magnified and exacerbated inequities in health care, with communities of older people disproportionately affected by the disease. What efforts are needed to coordinate care in smaller communities in Utah?

A: Rural communities in Utah are often more isolated than in other parts of the country. In recent years, telemedicine technology and rapid air transport have greatly improved care for those...
communities. State and county public health departments have done an admirable job in getting the vaccines out to the rural area.

Q: In your opinion, how can retired senior physicians contribute their time in retirement?
A: I retired from active practice soon after my 65th birthday (Medicare eligible), three years ago. I continued to do volunteer work and still serve on committees of my state medical society. After about a year into retirement, I felt the need to interact more with my colleagues to stay informed about current issues in medicine as well as to stay educated regarding medical science (i.e., COVID-19). I, therefore, reactivated my privileges at my hospital with "consultant-only" privileges. That gave me access to the physician parking lot and the physician lounge, a big perk!

In my opinion, retired physicians are under-utilized. Many of them would like to use their lifetime of knowledge gained to help others. In most cases they don’t need to be financially compensated but just want to contribute and feel useful. I know many retired physicians who serve in underserved areas or other countries as volunteers but this requires robust health that may exclude some.
Dr. Hamilton with his grandchildren.
Personally, I found that I was called on to testify before state legislative committees, and to meet with various government officials including national congresspersons and senators to discuss various medical topics. I seem to spend a fair amount of time discussing medical topics with friends, family, neighbors and others in my community. Many come to me asking for recommendations for referrals, especially surgeon referrals, due to my close association as an anesthesiologist. In many cases, people don't just need a medical opinion but they need help navigating our complex medical system. It is gratifying to me whenever I help a confused and nervous patient find the right physician for their condition. With some ingenuity and original thinking there are ways to utilize the knowledge and skills of senior/retired physicians to benefit our society.

I think all physicians, retired or not, have a wealth of knowledge and experience that they can share with their communities.

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