

# Stories from the Pandemic in Sundance, WY

Joseph Keating | RUOP III | 2021 | UW School of Medicine



## Background

- Demographics (Census Bureau, 2021).
  - Population -1,292
  - Median Household Income- \$54,583
  - Veterans- 130
  - Percent of Population without Health Insurance- 15.8%
  - (Census Bureau, 2021)
- Location
  - Located in the Northeast corner of the state (44.4064° N, 104.3758° W)
- Economy
  - Dining Services (117 people)
  - Mining, Quarrying, Oil/Gas (102 People)
  - Construction (86 People)
  - (Datausa, 2021).
- Vaccination Rate
  - Crook County (Sundance, WY) Vaccination Rate- 39.6%
  - Lowest Vaccination Rate in Wyoming by County
    - (Crooklib, 2021).



Map of Wyoming, (BestPlaces.com, 2021)

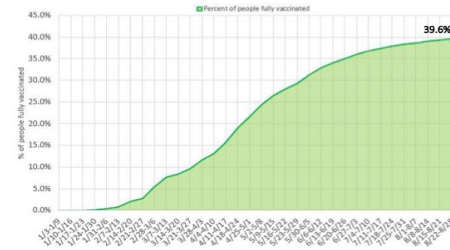
## Methods

- **Recruitment**
  - Interviewees were employees of Crook County Medical Clinic in Sundance, WY.
  - Interviewees were recruited by word of mouth.
- **Interviews**
  - Total Interviews- 3
  - Orion Pullen
    - Duration-37:02
    - Position: Paramedic/College Student
    - Learning Points
      - Conveying empathy to an interviewee fighting tears.
      - The value of having prepared questions, but maintaining flexibility to allow the conversation to flow.
  - Trey Hendrickson
    - Duration- 22:51
    - Position: Acute Care/Emergency Department RN
    - Learning Points
      - Maintaining objectivity after learning that the interviewee was unvaccinated.
  - JoAnne
    - Duration- 13:57
    - Position: Paramedic
    - Learning Points
      - Working with an interviewee who was naturally uncomfortable being recorded.
      - Preparing more questions to ask when an interviewee's answers are shorter than anticipated.

## Results

- **"Hero"**
  - Every interviewee shared the same opinion on being called a "healthcare hero". No one felt like they were a hero. Trey Hendrickson and Orion Pullen, both veterans, felt it was disrespectful to their fallen brothers and sisters in arms.
- **Patient Connection**
  - Being forced to wear full PPE at all times and being discouraged from interacting with COVID+ patients stripped these healthcare workers of the ability to connect with their patients on the same level as before. These healthcare workers turned into "faceless drones" rather than individuals.

Cumulative percent of Crook County residents who are fully vaccinated – by week



COVID-19 vaccine data are provisional and subject to change; the data was updated on 8/30/21. More information can be found on the Oregon Health Authority COVID-19 Vaccination Metrics dashboard.

<https://public.tableausoftware.com/profile/oronhealthauthority/covid-19/vy/OregonCOVID-19/vaccineFromMetroStatewideProgress>

(CrookLib.org, 2021).

## Conclusions

- **Oral history & its role in medical humanities**
  - Oral history can cut through the broader narrative.
  - Places the focus on the person, rather than the crisis itself. (Cave & Sloan, 2014).
  - Capture their individual experience.
  - Advocate for the narrator's story.
- **How did this experience influence the clinical portion of RUOP?**
  - Deepened my understanding of the trials these people had experienced.
  - Enriched our relationship.
  - These conversations made me feel like a part of the medical team.
- **Recommendations of how the information collected could benefit the community**
  - Impaired ability to connect with their patients.
  - Making the community more aware of this could issue.
  - Foster understanding.