

The community

A valuable aspect of rural experience is being a part of a rural community and having a 'sense of community'. Further, professionals and specifically medical professionals often receive a high level of respect in rural communities.

However, the close-knit nature of rural communities may mean that at first you feel like you are being rejected, or that it is difficult to become part of the community. Attending social and community events can be an important way to get to know the local people and gain their respect and trust.

The flip side of a close-knit community is that once you are part of it, it can become pervasive. Patients, or their family and friends, may contact you outside of hours or want to discuss their health in social settings. This can mean that your professional life intrudes into your personal time.

It is important not to let a pattern develop where your personal time is taken up with work concerns. Unless there really is an urgent situation, it is usually better to suggest the person make an appointment to see you to discuss the matter. Establishing the boundary between your personal and professional roles early can help prevent difficult situations in the future.