Documentary Examines Those on the Front Line of New Mexico's Opioid Crisis

The film, which is airing on PBS's Independent Lens, explores the challenges of rural health care.

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A new documentary now airing on the PBS series Independent Lens offers an unprecedented look at the complex factors contributing to a major rise in opioid addiction and the spread of hepatitis C virus (HCV) in New Mexico, SFgate reports.

Titled The Providers, the film examines rural health care in New Mexico and details how health care providers struggle to fight back against poverty, racism and addiction across the region. The documentary centers on three public health workers—physician's assistant Matt Probst, family physician Leslie Hayes, MD, and nurse practitioner Chris Ruge—who work at the El Centro Family Health Center, a group of clinics in the northern part of the state.

The providers meet pregnant mothers addicted to heroin, patients whose organs are failing as a result of alcohol addiction and older people begging for stronger painkillers. The team faces constant staff and funding shortages as well as the stigma that drives so much silence around opioid addiction and its related health crises.

Filmmakers Laura Green and Anna Moot-Levin, both of whom were raised by health care providers, say they filmed 350 hours of footage to tell their story. The documentary aims to provide a story of hope, unlike like other films on the topic, while revealing the challenges faced by those on the front lines of the opioid epidemic.

The Providers is airing online and most PBS stations. To learn more about the film, click here.

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