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Mapping Alaska's community pharmacies & population density to evaluate accessibility

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Background & Purpose

- Pharmacists are the most accessible healthcare providers, capable of providing a wide range of healthcare services in the community setting
- Purpose: To determine availability of community pharmacies in Alaska relative to geographic population density

This will highlight geographical areas and potential opportunities for pharmacists to fulfill community healthcare needs



Methods

- Study data was collected from the Alaska State Board of Pharmacy and US population census data
- ArcGIS was used to map pharmacy and US Census population data
- Alaska map was divided by boroughs and census areas
- Areas of higher population were highlighted in yellow and pharmacies indicated by mortar and pestle tag
- Project utilized publicly available data and was exempt from IRB review



Results

- 54.5% of Alaska's population resides in Anchorage/Matanuska Valley
- ~50% of 19 organized and 18 unorganized boroughs with low population density
- 48.4% of community pharmacies located w/in Anchorage/Matanuska Valley
 - 129 community pharmacies
 - 1 pharmacy desert



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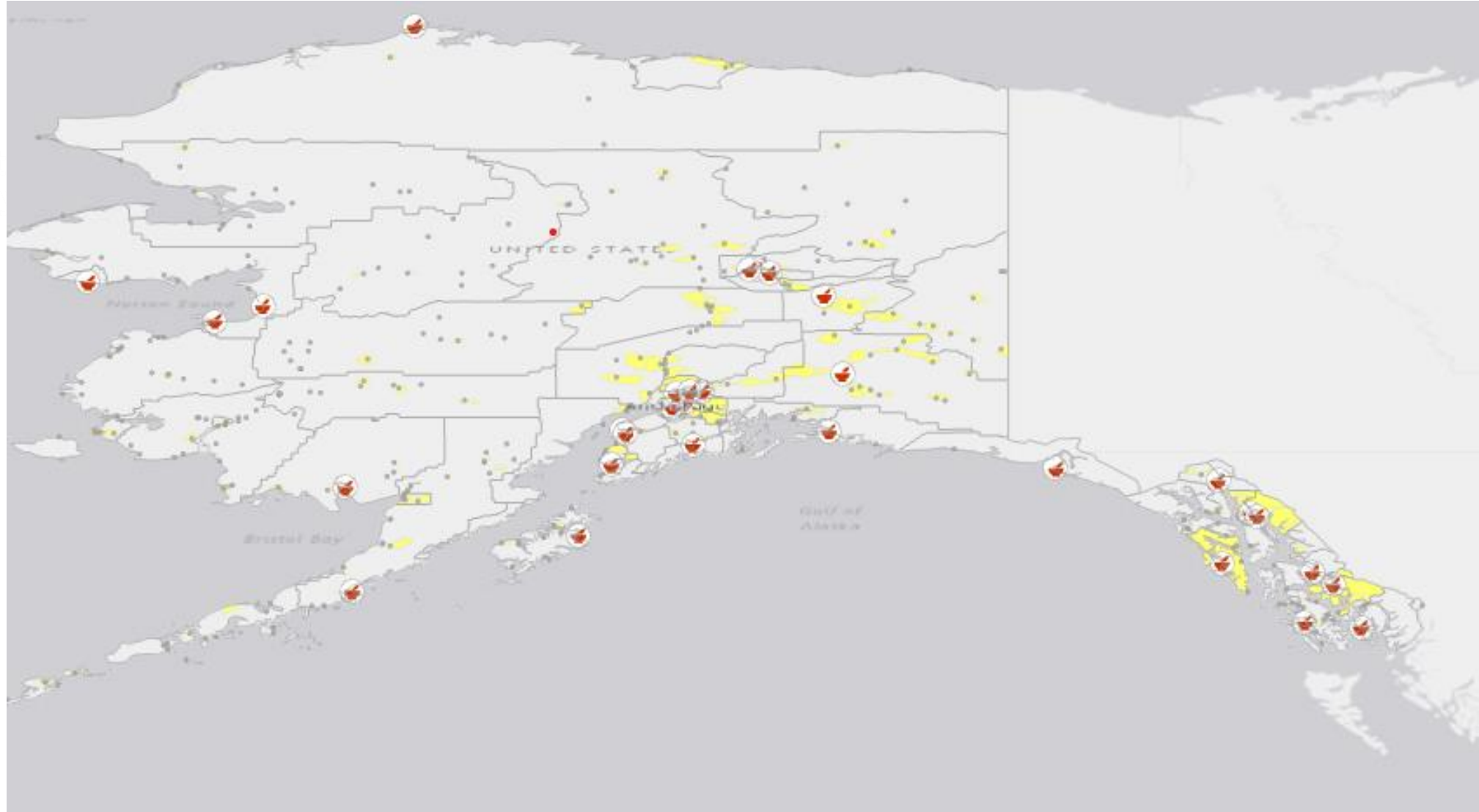
Map of Alaska Boroughs & Census Areas



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Conclusion

- Across geographic areas and communities in Alaska, there is a disparity in community pharmacy density
 - However, this disparity aligns with population density
- Geographic spread and easy accessibility allows community pharmacies to potentially fill healthcare gaps
 - However, pharmacies/pharmacists must be given the necessary authority and access to resources to serve populations and maximize access (e.g., COVID-19 vaccine)