

Poster Session II

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Catholic Hospitals and Patient Satisfaction: Where Do They Stand Against Their Secular Peers?

Ann Kutney-Lee, PhD, RN, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA ~ Gerardo Javier Melendez-Torres, BS/BSN, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA ~ Barbra Mann Wall, PhD, RN, FAAN, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

Do hospitals with Catholic affiliation have more patients that are highly satisfied because of hospital religious status? Catholic hospitals have played—and continue to play—a role both influential and innovative in American health care (Wall, 2005; Wall, 2010). Indeed, several national studies have placed Catholic hospitals as a class above secular institutions in measures of clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction (Thomson Reuters, 2010). While there is little current research on this issue, past studies have located care by Catholic hospitals higher on indices of compassionate care, provision of hospice and palliative care, and availability of HIV/AIDS services (White & Begun, 1998; White, Cochran, & Patel, 1998). This study, which was guided by the Quality Health Outcomes Model, examined patient satisfaction in adult non-federal acute care hospitals in California, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Florida, using 2006 American Hospital Association data, 2006 data from Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) surveys sent to patients after discharge, and data from the 2006 Nursing Care and Patient Safety survey. Descriptive analysis using t-tests and Fisher's exact test revealed few differences between the Catholic hospitals (n = 72) and the non-Catholic hospitals (n = 515) on indices of quality of nurse work environment, distribution by core-based statistical area, teaching status, % BSNs employed by each hospital, and mean of patients per nurse ($p > .05$). However, Catholic hospitals tended to be larger than non-Catholic hospitals, as well as more likely to be high-tech ($p < .01$). In a series of linear regressions across HCAHPS indices, Catholic status was never a statistically significant indicator of high patient satisfaction when the data was controlled for mean patients per nurse, nurse work environment, hospital bed size, high tech status, teaching status, and core-based statistical area location. In sum, these findings contradict other studies that assert Catholic hospitals' superiority in patient satisfaction. However, these data do not suggest that Catholic hospitals are doing any worse than their peers—especially given the traditionally high burden of uncompensated care. Catholic hospitals will continue to be trusted sources of healthcare well into the future, even as American healthcare continues to evolve and change.