Family planning service provision in Illinois religious hospitals: Racial/ethnic variation in access to non-religious hospitals for publicly insured women

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INTRODUCTION

As Catholic healthcare systems grow, an increasing number of patients can encounter restrictions on their reproductive healthcare. Providers within Catholic hospitals are expected to follow the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERDs), which prohibit contraception, sterilization, abortion, most fertility treatments, and other services. We analyzed Illinois public insurance enrollment data and family planning service claims (2015–2018) for women 18–45. We determined the religious affiliations of the hospitals available to publicly insured women in Cook County, as well as the number of Medicaid-covered deliveries and family planning services by hospital. We also assessed for racial/ethnic disparities in access to these services.

FINDINGS

● Among Cook County hospitals with L&D departments, 38% were Catholic-controlled and an additional 23% were of another Christian affiliation. In 2018, five of the seven HealthChoice Illinois plans had a greater Catholic hospital saturation than Cook County as a whole.

● Looking at plan enrollment by the percent of available L&D hospitals that are Catholic, we found that 85% of Black and Hispanic Cook County women were enrolled in one of the five high-Catholic-saturation plans, compared to 75% of White women (p<.0001).

● Controlling for hospital delivery volume, there were 93% fewer family planning services at Catholic hospitals and 45% fewer family planning services at Christian non-Catholic hospitals compared to non-religious hospitals.

IMPLICATIONS

We found that women with public insurance in Cook County, Illinois, do not have uniform access to family planning services. We also found that publicly insured Black and Hispanic women are more likely to be enrolled in high-Catholic-saturation plans and these women may be unaware that these plans may limit their access to family planning services. Patients receiving obstetric and family planning care should be informed of religious healthcare restrictions and the religious affiliation of the hospitals.

Read the full article here: http://bit.ly/Ci3_ReligHealthcare
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