



# Unanticipated consequences of Catholic hospital restrictions on postpartum patients

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## Background

- Postpartum family planning methods improve maternal and child health outcomes and increase reproductive autonomy<sup>1-2</sup>
- Catholic hospitals comprise 30% of all Illinois hospitals<sup>3</sup>
- Ethical and Religious Directives in Catholic hospitals restrict access to contraceptive and reproductive care<sup>4</sup>

## Specific Aims

- Examine patient and provider perspectives to identify challenges and opportunities in access to postpartum contraception in Catholic hospitals



## Methods

- Recruited 43 participants (21 patients, 22 providers) who received or provided obstetric care in Illinois Catholic hospitals
- Open-ended, semi-structured interviews audio-recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed



## Results

Thematic results revealed barriers that patients and providers experience around support, counseling, and access to postpartum contraception before, during and after delivery in a Catholic health system

## Results

*When we discharged patients, **they left with no contraception. Zero. Given our high rate of patients lost to follow-up, they left the hospital and that was the last time we ever saw them. [This] prevented the entire inner city population from accessing contraception.*** – OB/GYN at a Catholic Hospital

*A lot of our patients are **undocumented**. They don't have many other options, and they feel safe coming to our clinic. In our **political climate they're scared** to go elsewhere and delivering at a Catholic hospital is even more **harmful for our patients** because **they don't have a choice.*** – OB/GYN at a Catholic Hospital

*[After my last delivery] that I [had] actually become pregnant while on the IUD... My doctor laughed [and said], "Oh, it was meant to be." **We did not discuss contraception. I didn't feel like my interests were in his mind.** I think he just had his own agenda. **I didn't feel like he cared about me as a patient.*** – Patient who delivered at a Catholic Hospital

Themes across patient and provider interviews suggest the following actions to improve access:

- Increase transparency around Catholic hospital limitations in providing reproductive care
- Improve patient education in contraceptive options counseling during prenatal care
- Establish partnerships between Catholic hospitals and federally qualified health clinics and family planning clinics to facilitate transitions of care after delivery
- Leverage community resources such as doulas and home visiting programs to provide education and connect patients to care

## References

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