

Religious physicians are surveyed

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A U.S. study found that religiously focused physicians don't disproportionately care for poor and underserved patients.

The study -- conducted by Drs. Farr Curlin, Lydia Dugdale, John Lantos and Marshall Chin at the University of Chicago and Yale New Haven Hospital -- examined whether physicians' self-reported religious characteristics and sense of calling in their work were associated with focusing their practice on underserved patients.

The researchers said they found physicians who were more likely to report practice among the underserved included those who were highly spiritual, those who strongly agreed their religious beliefs influenced their practice of medicine and those who strongly agreed the family in which they were raised emphasized service to the poor.

Physicians who were more religious in general, as measured by intrinsic religiosity or frequency of attendance at religious services, were much more likely to conceive of the practice of medicine as a calling. However, the researchers said religious physicians were not more likely to provide services to the underserved.

The researchers concluded physicians who are more religious don't disproportionately care for the underserved.

The study appears in the July-August issue of the journal *Annals of Family Medicine*.

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