

Vast majority of physicians satisfied with hospital chaplain services

October 26 2009

A national survey of physicians' experience with hospital chaplains found that the vast majority of doctors were satisfied with the spiritual services provided. Physicians in the Northeast and those with a dim view of religion's effects on patients, however, were less likely to be pleased.

The results of the survey - the largest, most representative survey of physicians' attitudes about religion and spirituality conducted to date - are published in a research letter in the October 26 issue of the [Archives of Internal Medicine](#). George Fitchett, PhD, a chaplain at Rush University Medical Center, is the study's lead author.

"Religion and spirituality are important resources for coping with serious illnesses, but research indicates that patients' needs in this regard often go unmet," Fitchett said. "That's why it is important to understand how [physicians](#) view chaplains. Doctors play a crucial role in ensuring that patients get access to this kind of care."

The study was based on data from a random sample of physicians of all specialties selected from the American Medical Association Physician Masterfile. The survey response rate was 63 percent.

Of the 1,102 physicians whose responses were included in the study, 89 percent had some experience with chaplains. Of these physicians, 90 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with chaplains' services.

Those who were satisfied tended to be physicians who worked in

teaching hospitals; practiced medical subspecialties, such as cardiology or oncology, or other specialties, such as emergency medicine or neurology; endorsed the notion that religion and spirituality can have a good effect on patients; and believed it was acceptable to pray with a patient whenever the physician sensed it would be appropriate.

Those physicians who believed that [religion](#) and spirituality had a negative impact on patients were more likely to be dissatisfied with chaplains' services.

The survey also found that physicians in the Midwest were more likely to be satisfied with chaplains than physicians in the Northeast. The finding was unexplained because of limitations in the data collected.

Source: Rush University Medical Center ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Vast majority of physicians satisfied with hospital chaplain services (2009, October 26) retrieved 23 April 2024 from

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