

## Lori Freedman, PhD

### Associate Professor, Medical Sociologist



Lori Freedman, PhD, is a sociologist and a Greenwall Faculty Scholar at the University of California, San Francisco. She conducts research with Advancing New Standards In Reproductive Health (ANSIRH), a program of the Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health at UCSF. Dr. Freedman investigates the ways in which reproductive health care is shaped by our social structure and medical culture. Her book, *Willing and Unable: Doctors' Constraints in Abortion Care*, is a qualitative study of the challenges to integrating abortion into physician practice. Unexpected findings

from those physician interviews led her to research and write about the intersection of religion and health care, especially in the case of Catholic-owned hospitals, with an interest in how conscientious objection in medical practice operates at the institutional level. Dr. Freedman received her bachelor of arts degree at the University of Oregon and her PhD in sociology from the University of California, Davis.

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### Research projects and studies

**Health Workforce Pilot Project (HWPP) /AB 154.** On January 1, 2014, California enacted legislation (**AB 154**) culminating a decade worth of work to expand the pool of safe, qualified professionals authorized to provide early abortion care.

**Contraceptive Care in Community Health Settings.** Community health centers are a critical source of primary and reproductive health care for low income women. Yet a strained workforce and competing demands often make it difficult for them to prioritize contraceptive care.

**HWPP curriculum and competency resources.** With the culmination of the **Health Workforce Pilot Project (HWPP) #171** and the passage of **Assembly Bill 154 (AB154)** nurse practitioners (NPs), certified nurse-midwives (CNMs), and physician assistants (PAs) can now provide comprehensive first-trimester aspiration abortion care in California.

**Patient and Provider Experiences in Religious Hospitals.** Over 70% of religious hospitals are Catholic. Catholic facilities adhere to the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services* which prohibit abortion, contraception (including tubal-ligation), infertility treatment and more. Catholic hospitals treat **1 out of 6** acute care patients in the United States.

**Research Consortium on Religious Healthcare Institutions.** Catholic hospitals and other religious institutions are a large and growing part of the U.S. health care system. These institutions have specific policies restricting reproductive health care that impact the standard of care delivered.

**Clinical Restrictions.** One out of five hospital beds resides in a religious hospital. About three-quarters of those hospitals are Catholic and operate according to consistent restrictions outlined in the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services*. As of 2016, four out of the ten largest health systems in the U.S. were Catholic.

**The Growth of Religious Healthcare Systems.** There are two major types of hospitals that have been seeing increased growth in recent years: non-profit systems affiliated with the Catholic Church and those affiliated with privately owned for-profit systems. Currently, one in every six hospital beds is in a Catholic healthcare institution. Catholic-sponsored and -affiliated hospitals prohibit some health services, limit others, and often constrain the ability of staff to counsel a patient about prohibited care or provide referrals to alternative providers.

**Ethical Issues.** *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services (ERDs)* are written by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as policies for care in all Catholic health institutions. The ERDs lay out what is not permitted and what must require special interpretation and approval by an ethics committee.

### Recent publications

- May 2020. Abortion policies in U.S. teaching hospitals: Formal and informal parameters beyond the law (*Obstetrics & Gynecology*, May 2020)  
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- February 2020. Choosing a hospital for obstetric, gynecologic, or reproductive healthcare: what matters most to patients? (*American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology MFM*, February 2020)  
...Request pdf
- January 2020. Exploring young women's reasons for adopting intrauterine or oral emergency contraception in the United States: a qualitative study (*BMC Women's Health*, January 2020)  
...Request pdf
- September 2019. Denial of Care at Catholic Hospitals (September 2019)  
...Request pdf
- September 2019. Women's Expectation of Receiving Reproductive Health Care at Catholic and Non-Catholic Hospitals (*Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, September 2019)  
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- December 2018. Do women know whether their hospital is Catholic? Results from a National Survey (*Contraception*, December 2018)  
...Request pdf
- April 2018. When Conscience Calls for Treatment: The Challenge of Reproductive Care in Religious Hospitals (*NAM Perspectives*, April 2018)  
...Request pdf
- February 2018. "Birth Control can Easily Take a Back Seat": Challenges Providing IUDs in Community Health Care Settings (*Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, February 2018)  
...Request pdf
- February 2018. Expanding the Abortion Provider Workforce: A Qualitative Study of Organizations Implementing a New California Policy (*Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, February 2018)  
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- February 2018. Religious hospital policies on reproductive care: What do patients want to know? (*American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*, February 2018)  
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### Media coverage

- He needed a gender-affirming procedure. The hospital said no. (Vox, 11.1.19)

- [Open Forum: Affiliation with Dignity Health is too risky for UCSF \(San Francisco Chronicle, 5.15.19\)](#)
- [Will Ties To A Catholic Hospital System Tie Doctors' Hands? \(California Healthline, 4.29.19\)](#)
- [As Catholic Hospitals Expand, So Do Limits on Some Procedures \(The New York Times, 8.10.18\)](#)
- [Insurers Can Send Patients To Religious Hospitals That Restrict Reproductive Care \(FiveThirtyEight, 8.1.18\)](#)
- [How Catholic Bishops Are Shaping Health Care In Rural America \(FiveThirtyEight, 7.25.18\)](#)
- [Crisis pregnancy centers aren't the only ones putting limitations on women's reproductive care \(The Lily, 6.26.18\)](#)
- [Is Your Hospital Catholic? Many Women Don't Know. \(Rewire, 6.6.18\)](#)
- [Opinion: How Trump's decision puts women's health at risk \(The Mercury News, 2.10.18\)](#)
- [How Religious Health Care Hurts Women of Color \(New Republic, 1.19.18\)](#)