



Faith shouldn't dictate treatment in hospitals

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Concerned Clergy for Choice objects to the proposed hospital mergers in Rensselaer County. The intended consolidation raises serious ethical concerns about medical treatment. If Northeast Health combines with St. Peter's and Seton health systems, women will be affected because of religious strictures against providing many reproductive services.

Women need timely access to health care, especially in an emergency. It's not right to make it even more complicated to see a doctor.

For clergy, both pastoral experience and faith teaching emphasize the moral value at stake: Prompt medical treatment is critical. There should be no delay just because the patient is a woman.

People of all faiths come to hospitals and clinics. Since such hospitals are clearly providing care to the general public, they should do so according to the need of the patient, not the faith of those running the place.

When a patient declines contraception out of a religious conviction, she should be permitted to do so. When a patient elects contraception in a way that is consistent with her faith, her conscience and care must not be impaired because of another person's beliefs.

In a nation founded on religious freedom, it is wrong to combine local hospitals in a way that imposes one set of religious rules on a diverse community.

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