

Are hospitals meeting diversity challenge? 'Sort of,' new survey says

Nearly 80% of hospitals educating staff about cultural diversity

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June 11, 2012

Hospitals are working harder to promote equitable care, according to a [survey](#) released Thursday from the **AHA's** Institute for Diversity in Health Management, but there still is room for improvement.

The AHA's Health Research & Educational Trust surveyed 924 hospitals, to gauge how hospitals are addressing disparities in care and discovered the majority are collecting patient data related to diversity.

About 94% of hospitals are tracking racial data, and 90% are measuring patients' primary languages, but only 18% of the hospitals were actually using that data to benchmark gaps in care, the survey says.

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Fred Hobby, president and CEO of the **Institute for Diversity**, says hospitals may be failing to meaningfully use the data for fear of liability issues should they acknowledge disparities in care. Others simply lack the knowledge to carry out such a program or a “diversity champion” to lead the effort.

Hospitals have made strides in educating staff—nearly 80% said they educate all clinical staff about how to address unique linguistic and cultural factors affecting diverse patients, and 61% said they require all employees to attend diversity training. Hospital executive suites also are becoming more diverse, Hobby says; nearly 9% of CEOs are minorities, up from less than 2% in 1995.

"This survey will help hospitals focus attention and energy on areas of greatest need for the specific populations served by each hospital," said AHA President and CEO Rich Umbdenstock ([AHA News](#), 6/6; Stempniak, [Hospital & Health Networks Daily](#), 6/6).

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HR department budgets are likely to be subjected to enhanced scrutiny in 2009. In order to justify investment in diversity initiatives, many organizations are looking to benchmark themselves against similar facilities.

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Learn about the workshop Managing Diversity, which prepares leaders to meet the challenges posed by a highly diverse workforce and patient population.

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