

DIVERSITY ADVERSITY

Hospital executives seek out success stories after 'disappointing' progress diversifying leadership

Survey indicates that reworked efforts regarding diversity and disparities needed

Boosting diversity in the ranks of hospital management and on hospital boards is proving to be more difficult than expected, new survey results indicate.

Hospitals also could make better use of the extensive patient demographic data they collect to ensure that care is being provided equitably, according to the survey "Diversity and Disparities: A Benchmark Study of U.S. Hospitals in 2013."

The results are a sign that hospital executives need to re-evaluate what they're doing and figure out how to do better, says Richard de Filippi, chair of the board for the Institute for Diversity in Health Management, which produced the survey with the Health Research & Educational Trust, both of which are affiliates of the American Hospital Association. "To me, the results are disappointing," de Filippi says.

The survey results indicate that the percentage of minority hospital board members in 2013 remained unchanged from 2011 at 14 percent; likewise, the 12 percent of minorities in executive leadership positions was unchanged.

Minorities represented 31 percent of patients in 2013, according to the survey of about 1,100 hospitals.

While 95 to 97 percent of hospitals are collecting patient demographic data, just 22 percent have used the data to identify disparities in treatment or outcomes on clinical quality indicators, readmissions or core measures from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

The issue is growing even more important as the industry shifts its focus to population health management. Government statistics indicate there are still large disparities in care based on access and quality measures.

Some hospital executives are achieving prog-



TAKE THE LEAD: Joseph Hill, chief diversity officer, Froedtert Health, says its diversity efforts benefit from being led by its CEO and president, Catherine Jacobson.

ress by getting a formal commitment from top management. Joseph Hill, vice president and chief diversity officer for Froedtert Health in Milwaukee, has organized an entire revamp of the health system's diversity and disparities effort since joining in 2010. Including top management on its newly formed diversity council was vital. "I knew that if we were going to have a successful diversity council, it would have to be led by our CEO and COO," Hill says. The system's hospital presidents sit on the council as well.

He says that too often at organizations, diversity teams are led by enthusiastic and pas-

sionate employees who have no easy way to enact change. Having top managers lead the efforts eliminates that problem.

In addition to the council, there are two other types of committees that Froedtert managers and staffers can join, with a subgroup of one of them acting as advisers on culture.

And because Froedtert's work regarding diversity and disparities is included in its main strategic plan, top managers are going to pay attention to it. "If you don't have anyone accountable, it's not going to move forward," Hill says.

— PAUL BARR ●

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