

Baylor tapped for equal treatment study

Study aims to give all patients same quality of care

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Baylor Health Care System has been named to one of 28 slots of a national leadership program designed to reduce disparities in the way health care is provided to minority groups.

Specifically leading the program is Dr. Jim Walton, who is chief health equity officer of Baylor Health Care System. He is the only person from North Texas to be named to the program. Walton also serves as medical director for Project Access Dallas, a program that links volunteer physicians with uninsured people in Dallas County.

Massachusetts General Hospital's Disparities Solutions Center developed the program, which is the first of its kind in the country. The Boston-based program is designed to create a group of health care executives who have in-depth knowledge about causes and research in health care disparities.

Participants from 13 other health plans, hospitals and community health centers from across the country also were selected.

Baylor is way ahead of others in the industry, said Dr. Joseph Betancourt, director of the Disparities Solution Center at Massachusetts General Hospital. "I was very, very impressed. They are one of the few, perhaps one of the only (hospitals) that has an office of health equity, which I think is very unique and very cutting edge."

Baylor was selected because of a program it submitted to study the disparities in surgical infection prevention.

Basically, Baylor hospitals have been tracking if patients are given the correct antibiotics at the correct time of one hour prior to surgery and that antibiotics are stopped 24 hours after surgery. The Baylor Office of Health Equity, which consists of Walton and six others, now wants to determine what factors affect if those conditions are met and how the system can better ensure that everyone receives the same treatment.

In the program, Walton will have the support to finish analyzing the data Baylor already is collecting and implementing strategies to reduce the differences in care patterns.

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