

Does clerkship religious affiliation influence family planning training for medical students?

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Introduction

Despite contraception and abortion being fundamental aspects of family planning care, education and training regarding these topics are poorly incorporated or absent in undergraduate medical education (Guiahi et al., 2020). Restrictions placed on family planning care at faith-based hospitals may serve as an additional barrier to comprehensive medical student training during their Ob/Gyn clerkship (e.g. Bringley et al., 2022). This study sought to determine: 1) the degree to which contraception and abortion topics are covered during the core Ob/Gyn clerkship and 2) if family planning training during the Ob/Gyn clerkship differs between faith-based and non-faith-based sites.

Methods

We conducted a survey of NYIT, College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYIT COM) students in the 2023 and 2024 classes at both the Old Westbury, NY and Jonesboro, AR sites. Surveys inquired about self-perceived competency in contraceptive and abortion counseling confidence, ability, and knowledge following the 3rd year core Ob/Gyn clerkship, in addition to evaluating the experiences and observations during the clerkship and a brief objective knowledge assessment. Students also reported their clerkship site and religious affiliation of the site. Linear models and Fisher's exact tests were used to evaluate differences among religious, and secular, affiliations of the clerkship sites.

Results

In total, 102 students fully completed the survey including their Ob/Gyn clerkship site and the site's religious affiliation. The breakdown of religious affiliations of the clerkship sites includes: 54 non-faith-based, 26 Catholic, 15 Jewish, and 7 Protestant sites (see Fig. 1).

Across all clerkship sites more students observed patient care related to contraception compared to abortion (Fig. 2). Among site religious affiliations, students at non-faith-based sites reported the highest level of observations for 5 of the 8 family planning care topics presented. Students at Catholic sites reported the lowest level of observations for 6 of the 8 statements.

When looking at self-perceived competency following the clerkship, students at secular sites felt significantly more competent in contraceptive counseling confidence, ability, and knowledge compared to Catholic sites (Fig. 3). Overall competency in abortion related topics was low, regardless of clerkship site affiliation.

Responses to the Prompt: After the clerkship...

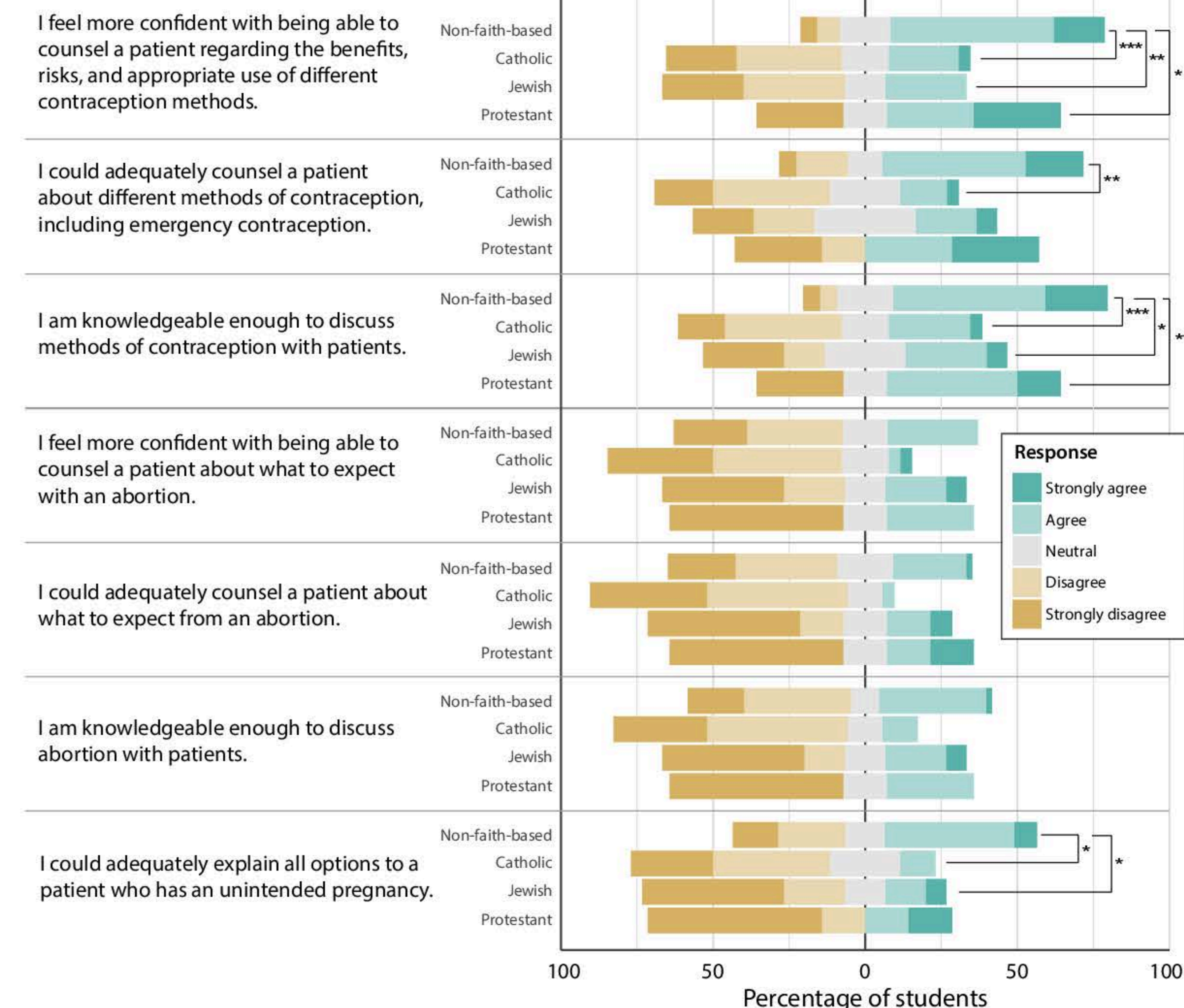


Fig. 3: Results of self-assessed student competency in contraceptive and abortion counseling. All questions began with a prompt regarding their Ob/Gyn clerkship, "After the clerkship...". All results are standardized by percentage of student responses within a religious affiliation category. Bars and asterisks represent a significant difference between religious affiliation of the clerkship site at either the P<0.05* or P<0.01** level.

Affiliation of clerkship site	NFB	C	J	P	Total
Total students	54	26	15	7	102
Gender					
Female	34	17	10	6	67
Male	19	8	5	1	33
Prefer not to say/blank	1	1	-	-	2
Self-described racial identity					
East Asian	6	2	2	1	11
South Asian	10	5	2	1	18
Latino, Hispanic, or Spanish	3	2	-	1	6
Black or African American	2	0	2	0	4
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	1	-	1	3
White	34	17	10	4	65
Prefer not to say	1	2	-	-	3
Religion					
Protestant	7	-	2	1	10
Catholic	7	10	5	1	23
Jewish	5	2	2	-	9
Muslim/Islam	5	3	1	-	9
Hindu	1	1	1	1	4
Other Christian	5	-	2	2	9
Other non-Christian religion	4	-	-	-	4
Not affiliated or none	20	10	2	2	34
Class year					
2023	19	7	6	6	38
2024	35	19	9	1	64
Campus site					
Jonesboro, Arkansas	9	4	-	7	20
Old Westbury, New York	45	22	15	-	82

Fig. 1: Characteristics of survey respondents. NFB = non-faith-based; C = Catholic; J = Jewish; P = Protestant

Responses to the Prompt: During my OB/GYN clerkship, I observed:

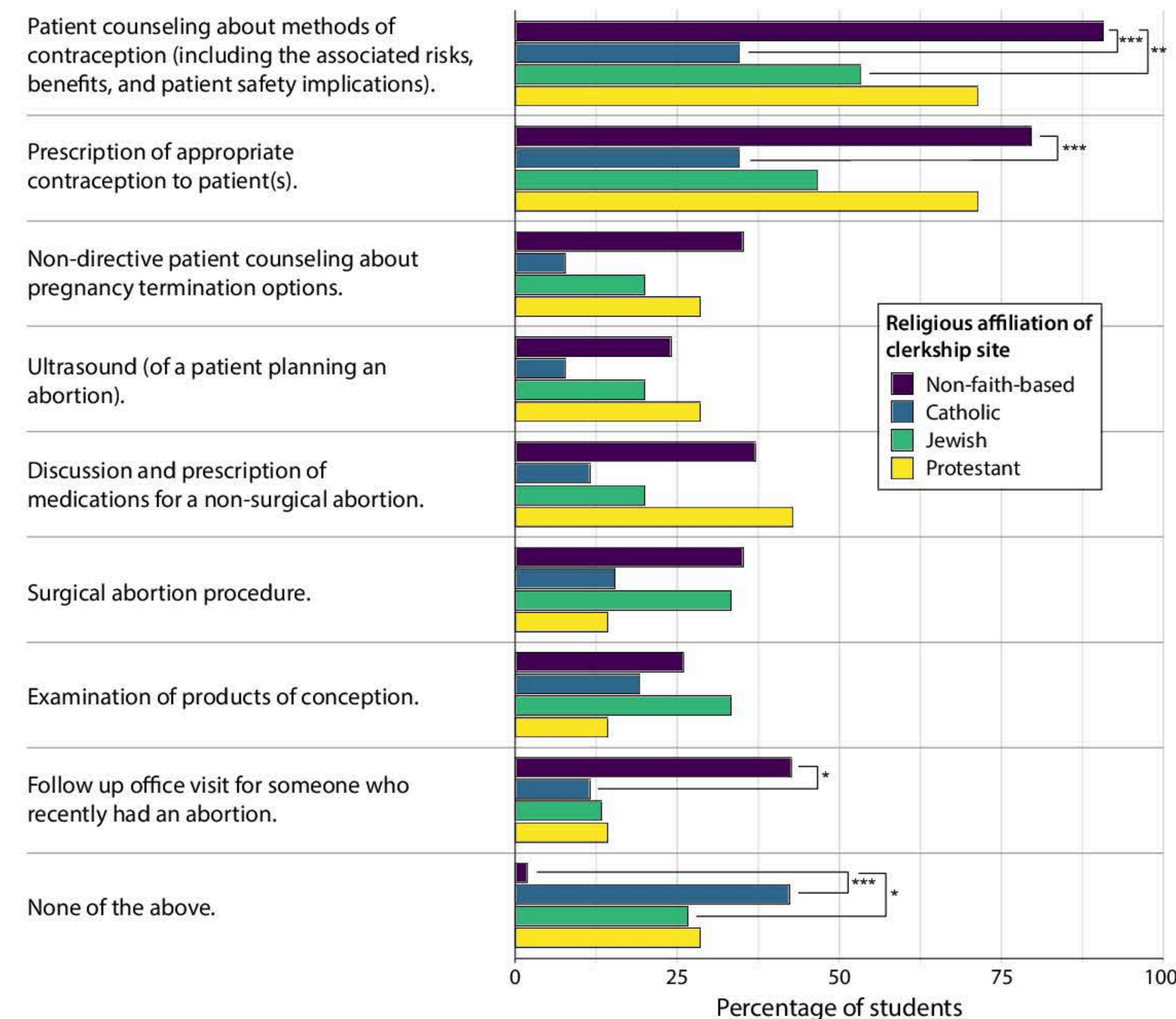


Fig. 2: Results of student observations regarding family planning topics. All questions began with the prompt, "During my OB/GYN clerkship, I observed...". All results are standardized by percentage of student responses for the religious affiliation of the clerkship site. Bars and asterisks represent a significant difference between religious affiliation of the clerkship site at either the P<0.05*, P<0.01**, or P<0.001*** level.

Conclusions

Clerkship training at faith-based sites, specifically Catholic sites, results in poorer Ob/Gyn training outcomes, particularly in contraceptive care. Training outcomes in abortion care were poor at all clerkship sites.

Read the paper!

Feltman et al. Sci Rep 14, 3667 (2024)



References:

- Guiahi M, Teal S, Kenton K, DeCesare J, Steinauer J. Family planning training at Catholic and other religious hospitals: a national survey. *Am J Obstet Gynecol.* 2020;222:273.e1-e9.
- Bringley J, Zu V, Jarlekar A, Daoud Yilmaz F, Flink-Bochacki R. Effects of rotating at a Catholic hospital on medical student contraceptive objective structured clinical exam scores. *Contraception.* 2022;106:64-67.