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Review of Paging God: Religion in the Halls of Medicine by Wendy Cadge

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Paging God: Religion in the Halls of Medicine. By Wendy Cadge. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Pp. xii+293. \$25.00.

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Research on the relationship between religion and health is rapidly becoming a core area in the sociology of religion. Much of this research is quantitative, focusing on associations between indicators of religiosity and both physical and mental health. Little research, however, explores the treatment of religion and spirituality in existing medical institutions. With urbanization, longer life spans, the decline of dangerous jobs, and other social changes, we are spending far more time in hospitals than we used to; as Wendy Cadge notes, we are considerably more likely to die in hospitals than we used to be. The growing prevalence and length of hospital stays combined with increasing religious diversity force us to ask how medical professionals address religion in contemporary, secular hospitals. This question is the focus of Cadge's *Paging God*.

Drawing on historical records, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic work in 17 large, academic hospitals, Cadge explores the ways that medical professionals deal with religion in their daily work. The narrative includes stories highlighting key points, such as an account of a dying Buddhist monk in the opening pages. Most of her data, however, come from her time shadowing a chaplain in one hospital, interviews with chaplains, administrators, physicians, and nurses in several hospitals, and time spent

with the staff of two intensive care units (ICUs). While there is no formal division, the book has two relatively distinct parts.

The first half of the book focuses on the institutionalization of religion in hospitals, principally through chapels and chaplains. After devoting a chapter to the history of religion and spirituality in U.S. hospitals, Cadge presents an informative account of the different ways hospitals allocate, decorate, and sometimes marginalize chapels. The next two chapters focus on hospital chaplains. The reader learns about the ways that chaplains come to the occupation as well as the fact that they are disproportionately liberal Protestants, which provides them with flexibility in dealing with people from various religious backgrounds. The key findings are that there is considerable variety in the ways chaplains are utilized, that chaplains are regularly marginalized, and that other hospital staff are often unclear about the role of chaplains in contemporary, secular hospitals. Cadge develops a typology of chaplaincy departments that appears to explain some of the variation in the ways chaplains are utilized. Mirroring changes in U.S. society more generally, there is a movement to reframe chaplains' work in terms of "spirituality" rather than "religion," which is intended to be "more inclusive and broadly welcoming" (p. 88).

The second half of the books deals predominantly with religion and death in hospitals, though Cadge is somewhat critical of the connection many people make between religion and death in the context of medical institutions. There are two chapters focusing on religion and spirituality in ICUs. On one hand, physicians and especially nurses in ICUs appear to understand the importance of religion and spirituality to many of their patients and patients' families. On the other hand, ICU staff, especially physicians, may be dismissive of religion when there are potential conflicts between the mandates of medical and religious institutions. This problem is particularly acute with end-of-life decisions. Cadge also addresses staff religiosity and spirituality, both through discussions of staff participation in religious rituals with patients, which make some staff uncomfortable, and through discussions of how doctors and nurses make sense out of their constant exposure to illness and death.

Cadge returns to the work of chaplains in the penultimate chapter, focusing on how chaplains deal with death in hospitals. Chaplains, as she notes, are responsible for much of the "dirty work," such as "naming death," facilitating conversations about death, and interacting with the families of deceased patients. The different ways that hospitals institutionalize chaplaincy are evident in the various ways chaplains are incorporated into the routines surrounding death. In some hospitals, chaplains are part of palliative care teams, and they are called to all deaths, while in other hospitals chaplains are rarely called to deal with deaths. Cadge points out that this variation is associated with the type of chaplaincy department, ranging from "professionally oriented departments" to "traditional departments." As Cadge concludes, the connection between chaplains and death serves to further reinforce the view that religion is most relevant to end-of-life issues in hospitals and to marginalize chaplains from other hospital staff.

Overall, *Paging God* is an informative account of religion and spirituality in contemporary hospitals. The book addresses key sociological issues as they play out in the hospital context, such as problems with communication between patients and staff and between chaplains and other hospital staff or stratification in hospitals in terms of the role of chaplains, as well as the allocation of religious and spiritual issues to nurses rather than doctors, the movement to broader understandings of spirituality rather than more narrow conceptions of religion, and, relatedly, problems with diversity in contemporary secular institutions. The book extends Cadge's already influential work on religion and spirituality in secular contexts, and places the findings within the broader literature on religion and health, particularly in the concluding chapter. Readers interested in patients' views of religion and spirituality in medical institutions will be disappointed, as the book focuses on hospitals and staff. In addition, those interested in physicians in particular may find the book lacking, since Cadge gives far more attention to chaplains and nurses than to physicians. Nonetheless, *Paging God* is an important contribution to the religion and health literature. The book moves beyond the more common focus on the association between religion and health to examine the ways that medical institutions address religion, how staff in these institutions respond to religion and spirituality in the hospital context, and how their work in hospitals influence their own religion and spirituality.