

As Americans With Disabilities Act Enters 34th Year, Disabled Americans Still Struggle to Access Equitable Healthcare

The anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act highlights major inequalities in healthcare for people with Intellectual and developmental disabilities.

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, USA, July 15, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Across the United States, July marks Disability Pride Month in recognition of the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA was originally signed into law on July 26, 1990, to ensure equal rights for people with disabilities. Yet, nearly 34 years later, discrimination in healthcare continues to persist, leading to poorer health outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



According to a recent study published by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), adults with disabilities are significantly more likely than those without disabilities to report having fair or poor health (40.3% vs. 9.9%) and have higher rates of obesity, physical inactivity, diabetes, and heart disease as well as higher prevalence of certain cancers.(1)

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Dr. Craig Escudé, President of IntellectAbility

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) continue to die at alarming rates due to highly preventable comorbidities, including aspiration, bowel obstruction, seizures, dehydration, and sepsis. While it is widely agreed upon that these comorbidities play a major

role in quality of health, strong evidence indicates that differences in health and mortality between people with IDD and those without are also a result of inequities in healthcare.(2)

The ADA requires that healthcare entities provide full and equal access for people with disabilities. Yet, people with IDD are subject to much lower rates of routine health screenings for serious medical conditions, including hypertension, osteoporosis, breast, cervical, and colon cancer. As a result, these individuals suffer much higher instances of certain cancers and other preventable medical conditions.

“In every setting, people with disabilities still face significant barriers to accessing equitable healthcare services,” says Dr. Craig Escudé, President of IntellectAbility. “People with intellectual and developmental disabilities often present signs of medical distress much differently than other patients. A lack of education on how to properly understand these differences can lead to misdiagnosis and improper treatments for people with IDD.”

The absence of proper medical training continues to present one of the greatest barriers to ensuring equitable medical treatment for people with disabilities. A survey of 714 practicing US physicians found that only 40.7% were very confident about their ability to provide the same quality of care to patients with disabilities. The study further found that just 56.5% strongly agreed that they welcomed patients with disabilities into their practices.(3)

“People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have wants, needs, and desires just like everybody else. They are just as worthy of equal treatment, including ensuring that their health needs are met, says Dr. Escudé. Training clinicians to better understand and care for these individuals is integral to helping them live longer, more fulfilling lives.”

IntellectAbility provides tools and training to agencies, governmental entities, and supporters of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to foster early recognition and mitigation of health risks, thereby improving health and wellness. One such tool is the Health Risk Screening Tool (HRST), of which they are the sole developer, producer, and distributor. The web-based HRST is the most widely used and validated health risk screening instrument for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. IntellectAbility also provides numerous health-related and person-centered service training for supporters of people with IDD. With an unrelenting focus, IntellectAbility works to fulfill its mission of improving health and quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and other at-risk populations. For more information, visit www.ReplacingRisk.com

Sources:

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