

Abstract title:

Teach MEDisability: Changing How Disability is Taught in Medical School

Authors:

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Background:

According to recent data, 25% of the general population identifies as disabled, in contrast only 5% of medical students identify as disabled (1,2). This means that most future physicians will treat people with disabilities in their practice without having experienced disability themselves. Therefore, the medical setting is where most students have an introduction into what it means to live with disability. Most medical science curriculums still subscribe to the medical model of disability where disability is presented as a “problem” that needs to be “solved” (3). Disability scholarship is now in favor of the social model of disability where the inaccessibility of the environment leads to disability (3). A concrete example of the medical model in the classroom are the photos presented to teach the disability’s phenotype. Photos are mostly deidentified and taken in a medical office. This means that medical students are being presented with an idea of disability that is very different from how it is lived, which will impact how those physicians treat patients with disabilities in the future.

Objectives:

1. To bring the social model of disability into the medical science classroom, a photo gallery of people with disabilities will be created where the photos are submitted by individuals themselves and are set outside of the medical setting.
2. To expand student perception around what it means to live with a disability.

Methods:

After securing the appropriate permissions and working with the CU legal department to create a REDCap form using their photo release form, organizations that provide advocacy and community for people with various disabilities contacted and asked to spread the word about this project. The materials provided to these organizations included a brief overview of the project, and a link to a public facing website where they could learn more and access the redcap form. From this step, photos were collected and organized into the photo gallery site that lecturers would have access to.

Outcomes:

A SharePoint site has been created that is only accessible to people with CU login credentials. It currently has eighteen different conditions pictured in sixty-one photos for use in CU medical science lectures. Instructors have been made aware of this resource through direct outreach to course directors, as well as in a Plains Course & Content Director meeting.

Next Steps:

Eventually, the goal is for this photo gallery to become a resource for medical schools across the country in reframing the way disability is taught in their curricula. For that to happen, the

website will need to be transitioned to one that is publicly accessible. This is currently being pursued through ongoing conversations with university communications and legal. Additionally, data will be collected around how often this site is accessed by CU lecturers.

#### References:

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