DID YOU KNOW . . . ?

- There are over 61 million people in the US with disability, making it the largest minority group in the country.
- One in every 4 people has or will have a disability at some time in their lives.
- Disability occurs in all age groups, gender, race and ethnic groups, socio-economic groups, and countries around the world. It occurs more often in women than men.
- Although life expectancy is shorter for people with disability than those without, many people with disability have a normal or near-normal life span.
- People with disability make major contributions to their families, occupations, and society as a whole; make decisions about their lives and health; and have good quality of life.
- People with disability seek and receive healthcare in every type of setting (e.g., maternity care settings, intensive care, outpatient and inpatient settings, community-based facilities).
- Although some healthcare providers specialize in providing care to individuals with disabilities, all healthcare providers need to provide high quality care to this population.
- Lack of knowledge on the part of healthcare professionals and negative attitudes are major barriers to quality healthcare for those with disability.
- Many healthcare professionals, including nurses, have negative attitudes toward individuals with disability.
- Inclusion of people with disabilities as part of a teaching team can counteract healthcare providers’ negative views about them.
- It is important to ask people with disability about how their disability affects them in order to provide quality healthcare.
- Healthcare professionals across all disciplines lack adequate information about providing quality care for individuals with disability.
• Healthcare providers can improve patient education by considering health literacy and optimal communication approaches for individuals with disability.
• Providing accommodations to patients with disability (accessible sites, interpreters, assistance in transferring from chair to exam table) is a responsibility of the healthcare provider and not the patient.
• People with disability are as interested in sexuality, intimacy, pregnancy, and childbearing as those without disability.
• Even if someone with a disability is unable to communicate verbally, that individual has a right to self-determination and to make health-related decisions.
• Over one-third of people with serious mental health disability do not receive treatment for their disability.
• Multiple international and national agencies and organizations have called for inclusion of disability in all health professions education.
• Many barriers to healthcare for persons with disability can be addressed with a minimum of expense.
• People with disability are at increased risk for violence and abuse, with those with specific types of disability at higher risk than others.
• The Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 was the first comprehensive civil rights law designed to prevent discrimination of people with disability.
• Advances in technology enable many people with disability to see, hear, communicate, work, and go to school.
• Disability does not mean poor health; people with disability can be very healthy.
• Mortality from chronic illnesses is high in people with disability because of lack of screening and other preventive healthcare and delayed diagnosis.
• People with disability, especially those who have had a disability for many years, are the experts on their own disability and should be recognized and treated as the experts.
• Exposure to excessive noise is the most common cause of hearing loss disability and the most preventable cause of it.
• Most children who are deaf at birth are born to hearing parents.
• Shouting is a common but ineffective way healthcare professionals try to communicate with individuals who have hearing or vision loss.
• Increasing the number of individuals with disability in healthcare professions is an effective way to improve attitudes of healthcare professionals toward individuals with disability and to confront barriers to care.
• Although safety concerns are often used as justification for excluding individuals with disability from admission to nursing programs, no data support increased safety risks.
• Women with disability have been refused obstetrical care; many providers believe that women with disability are (or perhaps should be) asexual and should not have children.

Learn about these issues in detail and more in Delivering Quality Healthcare for People with Disability

Delivering Quality Healthcare for People with Disability

Suzanne C. Smeltzer helps nurses take the lead in redefining education and address the needs of people with disability. People With Disability provides a roadmap for nurses, nursing students, and other healthcare professionals to deliver evidence-based care. The educational intervention would help them deliver optimal care.

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