

# Student Reflections on Extending the Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD) Curriculum at Albert Einstein College of Medicine

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## Background

People with disabilities (PWDs) make up 25% of the United States population<sup>1</sup> and have been officially recognized as a **group with health disparities**<sup>2</sup> in the United States. However, **over half** of practicing physicians believe they are **inadequately trained** to provide care to this population or address their needs<sup>3</sup>.

## Objectives

- Provide medical students with the opportunity to:
- Understand how physical and intellectual disabilities present and influence all aspects of patients' interactions with the healthcare system
  - Engage in discussion around barriers to healthcare access among people with disabilities and ways to address these issues
  - Develop communication and clinical skills to facilitate productive interactions with patients with IDD as future clinicians

## Disability Curriculum

### AADMD NICHE-Med Grant<sup>4</sup>

- 2 hour session: Nervous System and Human Behavior 2nd year course (2017-Present):
  - Didactic on history of IDD and stigma
  - Didactic Overview Developmental Behavioral Disabilities Pediatric
  - Didactic Adult Medical Care in IDD
  - Panels with self-advocates/Family Member
- 2 hour session: Introduction to Clinical Medicine (ICM)
  - Offered in 2018 and 2019
  - Small-group history-taking with self-advocates

### Service Learning

- est. 2022
- Sites that offer Services & Supports for People with Disabilities
  - ADAPT Community Network
  - Einstein Buddies
  - Amputee Walking School

### Transition to Clerkship Course

- est. 2021
- 2 hour session consisting of:
  - Panel with self-advocates sharing positive and negative health experiences
  - Didactic Subspecialty focus psychiatry, neurology, dentistry, autism
  - Lecture on common conditions, physical exam, and important considerations when working with patients with IDD or physical disabilities

### Clinical Rotations

- est. 2022
- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Year
  - Rose F. Kennedy Adult Primary Care IDD Clinic
  - ADAPT Community Network Bronx Clinic

## Pre-Clinical Education

### Basic Sciences + Systems Courses

*Existing: Genetics course integrates positive visual representation.*

- ★ **Expand use of unbiased visual representation in course material to reduce implicit biases towards diseases being taught<sup>5</sup>**
  - Educational films narrated by patients themselves
  - Expansion of positive visual representation to all systems courses

Sort through Positive Exposure gallery and FRAME film collection to source photos and videos and determine appropriate inclusion in lecture slides

### Bioethics

*Existing: Discussions touching on patients who have become disabled near end of life*

- ★ **Highlight issues regarding autonomy, decision-making capacity, and access to life-saving care among IDD population**
  - Case of Russell: adults with IDD taking on an active participatory role in their healthcare
  - Case of Michael Hickson: hospital denying a patient with IDD medical treatment because it deemed him to have a low quality of life due to pre-existing quadriplegia and head injury

Implement one class session devoted to one or both of these cases, consisting of a lecture on the relevant ethical issues followed by small group discussion on the cases, facilitated by preceptors with relevant experience

### Health Systems & Health Equity

*Existing: Lecture on "Ableism in Medicine"*

- ★ **Develop student agency to address structural, systemic, and social factors that impact health outcomes for people with IDD**
  - Resources students can refer pts with IDD to (ex. OPWDD)
  - Systemic barriers to comprehensive care (ex. transition to adult care)

Add these additional topics and resources to the existing lecture and facilitate small group discussion on this topic.

## Clinical Education

- ★ **Maintain exposure to ways in which a physical or intellectual disability may affect aspects of clinical encounters including history collection, physical exam and procedure administration, differential diagnosis reasoning and creation of assessment and plan.**

Incorporation of problem-based learning (PBL) cases in Pediatrics and Family Medicine Rotations that incorporate discussion questions about disability at each stage of a patient encounter.

## Becoming a Physician (BAP)

### Clinical Reasoning Skills

- ★ **Expose students to various ways in which a physical or intellectual disability may affect aspects of the encounter**

- Problem Based Learning case featuring a patient with spastic hemiplegic cerebral palsy with a renal issue

Develop PBL cases that incorporate discussion questions about disability at each stage of the encounter, including history collection, physical exam, drawing labs, performing procedures, developing a differential diagnosis, and creating an assessment and plan

### Physical Exam Education

- ★ **Train medical students in the use of accessible medical equipment and to grow comfortable in conduction a physical exam for a patient who uses assistive devices and has reduced mobility**

- Hands-on instruction on using Hoyer lifts
- Self-advocates/actors with IDD as standardized patients

Introduce a PE small group session where there is a demonstration of a physical exam on a standardized patient who is a wheelchair user, facilitated by faculty with experience with accessible medical equipment.

### Communication Skills

- ★ **Equip medical students with skills for building rapport with patients with a disability**

- Navigating caretaker presence and involvement in history-taking
- Nonverbal cues and communication skills
- Self-advocates/actors with IDD as standardized patients

Introduce a communication skills small group session where students establish rapport and obtain a history from a standardized patient with IDD with someone acting as a caretaker.

### Clinical Experience

- ★ **Expose students to a group home setting where many individuals with IDD live**

- Inter-professional care team at group home
- Patient interview in home setting

Establish a site visit to a group home where students interview a patient with their support staff present and observe the routine and environment of the group home.

## Discussion

This proposal is developed based on the reflections of fourth-year MD student AADMD chapter leaders who have appreciated the existing disability education groundwork laid by our predecessors and advisors, and seen opportunities to extend disability education as a longitudinal, multidisciplinary thread across preclinical and clinical phases of training. It aims to improve students' skills in clinical reasoning, physical exams, and communication with patients with disabilities. Further integration of disability throughout several medical school courses will build empathy and competence among medical students while addressing systemic barriers and promoting inclusive care for patients with IDD.

## Future Steps

- Work with curricular and educational deans as well as individual faculty to build buy-in and determine specific content of each lecture/session where disability will be introduced
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions and if objectives are being met by conducting pre- and post- survey studies among students as part of QI projects.

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## References

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