

Overview of 'Disability' Among Students in Health-related Fields

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Until March 7, 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that there were 1.3 billion people worldwide with some degree of "disability," meaning 1 in 6 people (1). It also reports that these individuals are at double the risk of developing diseases such as depression, strokes, obesity, among others. The WHO itself declares that there are factors contributing to the inequity in the distribution of resources to people with some degree of "disability," recognizing social determinants of health as a fundamental factor, with education being one of the most important (2).

In light of the above, it explains why many primary and secondary educational models around the world have made curricular adjustments for their students. In order to narrow the gap in education, at least in Chile, the regulatory legal framework has undergone modifications since 1975, achieving significant changes in the educational system with Decree 170 in 2010, which determines the responsibility of educational institutions for correct biopsychosocial diagnosis and follow-up of students with "disabilities" (3).

However, even though there have been these advances in terms of education, there is a question about what happens with the confrontation of "disabilities" or "special educational needs" in higher education. Thus, in Chile, in 2022, a document of inclusive experiences in higher education was developed, led by Navarro and Gárate (4), which describes that the most important aspects to improve are related to the processes of adaptation and editing of materials to ensure accessibility and efficiency in the implementation of inclusive initiatives, as well as the importance of support programs for people with "disabilities" in higher education institutions.

Given that the purpose of this journal is to deepen topics related to medical education, evidence regarding "special educational needs" or "disabilities" has made progress. In fact, there are various articles that agree that institutions offering health-related careers should make adjustments to promote the inclusion of people with "disabilities," in order to meet their educational needs. Some of these proposed changes include fostering collaboration and leadership among educational institutions to address issues related to "disability," normalizing and anticipating the "special educational needs of students," promoting collaboration among them, and implementing models of equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion in medical schools (5).

Finally, it is worth noting that in this document, every time "disability" or "special educational need" is mentioned, it is in quotation marks, as it is the way it is approached in all articles reviewed to date. However, (and as a very experienced colleague commented to me), we should migrate our language from these concepts to some more inclusive ones such as "neurodiverse conditions" or "specific health conditions."

Conflictos de Interés: Sin conflictos de interés

Apoyo financiero y patrocinio: Sin apoyo financiero

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