

## **VIDEO #2: Disability Training for Practicing Health Care Professionals**

**Synopsis:** Adapted from “Disability Training for Future Health Professionals,” this video offers a functional definition of disability, includes prevalence data, and introduces you to individuals with disabilities and a family member who share best practices for communicating with and accommodating patients with disabilities.

**Length:** 27 minutes, 28 seconds

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. In their introductions, all individuals with disabilities shared that their hobbies included physical activity. Were you surprised? Why or why not? Why is this important?

#### ***Key Points to Cover with Students:***

- Being healthy is a realistic expectation for people with disabilities, and physical activity plays a key role in staying healthy.
  - Those who lead a sedentary lifestyle are more susceptible to acquiring secondary disabilities or health conditions.
2. What are some behaviors and health disparities which place people with disabilities at greater risk of acquiring secondary disabilities and health conditions than their non-disabled peers? What public health measures can be taken to address them?

#### ***Key Points to Cover with Students:***

##### **Examples of behaviors and health disparities include:**

- A sedentary lifestyle
- Obesity
- Higher rates of smoking than among those who do not experience disability
- Putting off or not accessing health screenings
- Not seeking medical intervention, often due to factors such as limited finances, few transportation options, and previous negative experiences with health care professionals

##### **Examples of public health measures include:**

- Ensuring that initiatives to encourage physical activity among the general population accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities
- Offering nutrition training for programs which serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)
- Educating transportation authorities, disability service providers and support groups on the importance of preventive health care and health promotion

3. What are some mistakes which the health provider (Ann) made throughout the video?

***Key Points to Cover with Students:***

- Ann did not speak directly to Angie. This is very common and makes patients feel like they are not a part of the health interaction and that they are receiving substandard care. ALWAYS engage the patient, even if he or she is nonverbal and his or her caregiver is the primary source of information.
- Ann was ready to move Angie's wheelchair without her permission. This was problematic because individuals with disabilities often feel that their technology is an extension of themselves. In addition, they may feel insecure without their technology because it offers independence, and any damage requiring replacement may force them to be without the technology for a significant period of time.
- Ann failed to introduce herself to Mike before leading him back to the exam room. Health care professionals should ALWAYS introduce themselves and describe their role to the patient, whether or not the patient has a disability. This is not only common courtesy but serves as a good icebreaker and provides vital information to the patient.
- Ann assumed that Tyler had a guardian. While guardians play a critical role for those whose disabilities prevent them from communicating or making decisions independently, you should not assume that all adults with disabilities have guardians. Most, in fact, do not.
- Ann attempted to finish Tyler's sentence for him. Many individuals with speech impairments find this to be offensive and anxiety-provoking. Be patient and allow individuals with speech impairments to complete their thoughts.

4. What disability accommodations did you observe or learn about during the video?

***Some accommodations to point out:***

- An accessible exam table benefits patients with physical disabilities
- A screen reader, electronic Braille reader, and talking blood pressure cuff benefit patients who are blind or visually impaired
- The use of sign language interpreters and Video Remote Interpreting benefit individuals who are Deaf
- A variety of clarification techniques can be used to effectively communicate with patients whose speech is difficult to understand

5. Why is the topic of sexuality often ignored by health professionals serving patients with disabilities? What impact might this have on these patients?

**Key Points to Cover with Students:**

- In the video, Tyler states, "People with disabilities have full lives, and want to experience friendship and love just like anyone else." William Burr, in a 2011 article entitled "Sexuality of the Disabled Often Overlooked," asserts:

"The sexuality of people with disabilities, many of whom require varying degrees of assistance to lead fulfilling sex lives, continues to be overlooked, avoided or even dismissed as a component of holistic care because of a longstanding stigma that shrouds disability and sex. ... Doctors and other health care providers often have problems discussing sex with disabled patients, experts on disability say."<sup>1</sup>

Burr's article quotes a number of persons with disabilities who talk about the importance of leading fulfilling sex lives. Sexuality is a natural part of life and should not be ignored just because an individual experiences a disability.

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1. Burr, W. (2011). Sexuality of the disabled often overlooked *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 183(5), E259-E260.