

**Awareness and sensitization of faculty and employees to the needs of differently-abled students in medical colleges and attached hospitals**

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**Abstract**

There are sufficient good laws to take care of the needs of the students with disabilities in educational institutions in India but it does not mean that there are no problems to the students with disabilities in the medical colleges and hospitals. A question definitely arises that is the faculty and other employees of the medical colleges are aware of the needs of such students or there is a requirement to sensitize the faculty and employees about the rules, regulations, and rights of the disabled students so that such students do not face any problem in their day to day activities and requirements.

**Keywords:** Differently-abled students; physically handicapped students; sensitizations of medical teachers; physically challenged students.

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**Introduction**

Definition of the disability “is “a physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions” (1) or “an illness, injury, or condition that makes it difficult for someone to do the things that other people do (2). While WHO defines this as “covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations” (3).

In India disability under the Act includes low vision and blindness, impairment in hearing and deaf, locomotor disability, Leprosy cured person but is still having a loss of sensation or visible locomotor disability, mental retardness and mental illness (4).

The commitment of the Indian polices for persons with disabilities were there even in the 1980s in the form of Mental health Act 1987 and which further improved with the Persons with Disabilities Act 1992 and which was amended in 2000 and National Trust Act in 1999 (5).

Equality of disabled persons with other persons of the society has been advocated for a long time and was initiated in Asia and the Pacific region in China in 1992 and they should be enabled to participate and India was one of the signatories to this proclamation (4).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Disabled Person [CRDP] adopted a proclamation in 2006, India signed the same in 2007 for the rights of the disabled and this proclamation became effective from 2008 (6).

An Act has been passed by the parliament of India in 2016 to give the rights to the persons who are physically challenged as recommended by the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with physical disabilities in 2006. This convention desired empowerment of the disabled persons so that there should be no discrimination, their dignity should be respected, and they should be able to have equal opportunities and should fully participate in the community by providing them accessibility and their rights should be respected under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016(7).

In the educational institutions which are funded or recognized by the government bodies, it is essential that children with disabilities have inclusive education and should construct buildings and other facilities which can be accessed by physically handicapped children (7). This becomes applicable to the medical colleges as they are governed by the National Medical commission created by the Central government as per the gazette notification of 8<sup>th</sup> August 2019 (8).

The government should also provide them transport which can be used by them and their attendants (7). To make their transport comfortable facilities should be provided so that they can use all sorts of transport and get their tickets and use the toilets and parking facilities (7).

Under clause 39 (sub-clause e) of this Rights of Persons With Disability [RPWD] Act, 2016 orientation and sensitization to the teachers should be provided by the government regarding rights of the disabled persons and human conditions of disability (7) and their rights are included in the curriculum (sub-clause f).

To make it inclusive for people with disabilities government has given reservation 3% in 1995 in the educational institutions in Persons with Disabilities Act 1995 and provided a comprehensive educational policy of providing curriculum and examination system, transport and accessible public places and also to take financial care of the books and other educational expenses (5).

Keeping in view the Act MCI has allowed the admission of students with disabilities (9) and included many conditions which look controversial and are being considered unfair & discriminatory as per global practices and are being opposed due to which MCI has amended certain guidelines on the representation of the disabled doctors (10).

To create awareness in higher education centers reservation should be provided to the differently-abled students to get admission, they should be provided guidance and counseling, and awareness should be created for the requirements of such students and institution should try to get such graduates placements to settle them too in their lives (11).

To learn in a better way, the needs of the individual differently-abled persons should be assessed so that they can learn in a better way. Assessment of such students may be a difficult and challenging process. Teachers should be made aware of how to assess such differently-abled students(11).

All architectural structures should be made disabled persons friendly so that they can utilize all the services and there is no hindrance to their movements and they should be provided special equipment to enhance the educational services in the medical institutions including learning and assessment devices, computers with software to read the screens for visually handicapped persons and they may also be provided financial assistance in the form of scholarships. (11).

3% reservation in jobs and promotion has also been given to persons with disabilities and fresh orders have issued in 2016 to properly implement these orders (12). Some posts should be identified for the disabled persons and should be filled (4) and this applies even to the medical colleges. Government budgets spent on this cause also was low in the nineties indicting that priority was low for such causes other than passing the laws (5).

There are good policies in India for the rights of persons with disabilities but different institutions implement it in different ways which may produce a good result or which sometimes leads to poor facilities for disabled persons (5).

While the policies are usually oriented towards the Public sector but private organizations also need to implement to make the non-discriminatory society (5).

Awareness of the laws and rights of the disabled students is low in a survey done in UP and Tamil Nadu households and poor in families with disabled persons (5).

Active use of the media plays an important role in creating awareness and sensitizing as has been displayed in Karnataka and the involvement of social organizations in this process improves the results (5).

A project has been carried out to make the studies inclusive and accessible (13).

UGC guidelines are also there to facilitate a better environment for studies of disabled students (14).

World Disabled Day should be celebrated so that the creativity and capabilities of the differently-abled persons can be highlighted (11).

### **Discussion**

It has been observed that in spite of the laws and statutory requirements by the governing bodies (4)(7) many medical colleges still do not have the facilities for the disabled students for the unrestricted movement. Governing bodies should be stricter so that all the educational institutes provide these facilities required for the disabled persons. The reason may be the lack of awareness or shortage of funds or simply managements are not sensitized to the requirements of the disabled persons. All the administrators of the medical colleges need to be made aware of the laws and statutory requirements to provide facilities to the disabled persons so that they provide the mandatory facilities for the disabled students. The government should make more efforts to sensitize the administrators and the faculty of the medical colleges so that disabled students can get their rights.

As required by the law to provide jobs to the persons with disabilities (4) it will be better if jobs in the faculty and the offices are provided to the disabled person and everybody in the medical college will be more sensitized for the problem of the disabled students in the medical colleges.

### **Conclusion**

Providing jobs to disabled persons in organizations is important so that people are sensitized towards working with disabled persons and it will go a long way to make a friendly atmosphere for the disabled person and empathy will be created towards disabled persons.

With increasing awareness levels better implementation of the laws about disabilities will be possible and such students will be able to enjoy their rights in a better way.

All the stakeholders in medical education should be made aware of the rights of the disabled students and the disabled students should also be involved in this process so that they do not face any difficulty in getting a proper education and there is no hindrance to their learning due to their disability.

### **Conflict of interest**

None

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