

Accessibility and inclusion: reflections, challenges, and advances in the field of health

Accesibilidad e inclusión: reflexiones, retos y avances en el ámbito de la salud

Acessibilidade e inclusão: reflexões, desafios e avanços no campo da saúde

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Over the past few years, we have seen significant advances in the debate and practice of care for people with disabilities in the health field. The implementation of the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Law No. 13,146/2015)¹, the expansion of discussions on the biopsychosocial model of care, the promotion and protection of health being articulated with other policies and actions through the new National Policy for Comprehensive Health Care for People with Disabilities (Ordinance GM/MS No. 1,526/2023)² and scientific production on the topic has contributed to a change from a perspective based on limitations to one that values functionality, autonomy and social participation.

In this context, the launch of the National Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities — New Living Without Limits (Decree No. 11,759/2023)³ also stands out, which reaffirms the Brazilian State's commitment to promoting citizenship, accessibility, and inclusion in all aspects of social life. The program seeks to integrate intersectoral actions focused on education, health, labor, social assistance, and human rights, strengthening the perspective of disability as a matter of social justice and equity.

However, many barriers persist that hinder full access to health services for people with disabilities. These barriers impact not only the use of services but also the quality of care provided and the experience of users and their families. Promoting accessibility and inclusion is one of the greatest challenges facing health systems. Much more than a legal imperative, it is an ethical commitment to human dignity, the right to health, and the appreciation of diversity.

This special edition is a plural space that brings together reflections, research, and reports that seek to give visibility to experiences, practices, challenges that still need to be overcome, and knowledge produced at the interface between health, accessibility, and inclusion.

By inviting the reader to this dialogue, we reaffirm that accessibility and inclusion are not limited to specific adaptations or the elimination of barriers, but rather constitute an ongoing process of cultural, institutional, and professional transformation. These advances require collective commitment, sensitivity, and innovation.

We hope this special issue contributes to strengthening critical reflection, inspires more inclusive practices in health services, and broadens the horizons of research in the field of disability. We hope that each page presented here can serve as an invitation to build a more just, equitable, and truly inclusive society.

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