

Rehabilitation Must Begin with Dignity

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As rehabilitation professionals, we frequently discuss function, mobility, independence, and quality of life concepts that remain central to our everyday clinical practice. People with disabilities face numerous challenges in their daily lives, many of which extend beyond the physical domain, and societal attitudes often add to their psychological burden. There is a need for greater attention from policymakers and administrators to develop practical and inclusive policies that promote disability awareness and ensure equal opportunities. Over time, clinical experience reveals that the challenges faced by persons with disabilities are not solely physical. Often, the deeper impact arises from how individuals are perceived, spoken to, and, at times, quietly judged.

In the News Focus “What’s Wrong With You”.¹ Blacker highlights a dilemma that persists across societies, whether in the East or the West. This issue remains uncomfortable even today. While the article raises important concerns, the everyday realities in many under-resourced settings remain far more complex and often underrepresented even in healthcare facilities. Across both high-resource and low-resource environments, the experience of disability is shaped not only by health services but also by social perception. Despite its relevance, this issue has received limited open discussion in many societies. The

phrase “What’s Wrong With You” reflects deeper societal beliefs shaped by cultural context and prevailing norms. They raise important questions about who speaks, what is implied, and how such language shapes everyday interactions and practices.

For this reason, rehabilitation should not be viewed narrowly as a set of therapeutic interventions. Rather, it represents a broader, person-centered process aimed at enabling individuals to regain participation, independence, and a sense of social belonging. Policymakers, administrators, educators, and community leaders all play a critical role in shaping environments that promote fairness and opportunity.

Academic platforms, including journals such as the Journal of Riphah College of Rehabilitation Sciences, can further contribute by advancing this broader discourse and highlighting underrepresented perspectives. This gap reflects wider societal priorities, where issues directly affecting dignity and self-worth are often overlooked or underemphasized. Media also has a critical role to play in raising awareness and promoting positive representation of disability.

Despite these challenges, individuals with disabilities have significant potential to contribute meaningfully to society and to broader social and economic development. However, achieving this requires structured policies, coordinated efforts, and

sustained collaboration at both national and international levels.

Ultimately, the more important question is not “What is wrong with you?” but rather, “What can we change to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in society?”.

References

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