



Integral to inclusion: amplifying public health leaders with disabilities

The Lancet Public Health and Bonnielin Swenor brilliantly highlighted the urgent need for greater disability inclusion.^{1,2} These excellent pieces add to the symphony of other advocates with disabilities and allies' voices who are hoping to catalyse efforts for disability inclusion in a post-pandemic world.^{3,4}

However, calls for better data, inclusion, and representation have periodically graced the pages of top-tier medical journals, alongside studies revealing damming disparities for people with disabilities for years.⁵ Despite growing evidence of inequity and tenacious advocacy, there are substantial gaps in meaningful inclusion and health equity for people with disabilities.

Swenor highlights how including researchers with disabilities "enriches our public health efforts and expands our research focus".² However, more public health and medical leaders with disabilities who can forge a new era of disability inclusion in public health are ultimately needed. Equally, medical and public health professional schools, journals' editorial boards, and health policy makers need to make open, measurable commitments to ensuring representation of people with disabilities, similar to how we report on gender parity, diversity, and other forms of representation. These commitments, along with strengthening data and monitoring, health worker training, and other equity efforts, can provide a framework for more inclusive health systems.

Without a multipronged approach to disability inclusion that emphasises amplifying people with disabilities in health leadership, there is a risk of perpetuating inequity or stalling necessary progress in this potentially pivotal moment. "Nothing about

us, without us" should be more than words, but a prompt to start conversations about disability representation in public health decision making.

I declare no competing interests.

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- 1 *The Lancet Public Health*. Disability—a neglected issue in public health. *Lancet Public Health* 2021; **6**: e346.
- 2 Swenor BK. Including disability in all health equity efforts: an urgent call to action. *Lancet Public Health* 2021; **6**: e359–60.
- 3 Nagesh S, Rotenberg S. A new era of accessibility: on persons with disabilities in the post-COVID world. *The Hindu* (Chennai), June 30, 2020. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-new-era-of-accessibility/article31948035.ece> (accessed June 1, 2021).
- 4 Shakespeare T, Ndagire F, Seketi QE. Triple jeopardy: disabled people and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Lancet* 2021; **397**: 1331–33.
- 5 *The Lancet*. Prioritising disability in universal health coverage. *Lancet* 2019; **394**: 187.