



More than Ramps: A Guide to Improving Health Care Quality and Access for People with Disabilities

Lisa I. Iezzoni, Bonnie L. O'Day

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Nearly twenty percent of Americans live today with some sort of disability, and this number will grow in coming decades as the population ages. Despite this, the U.S. health care system is not set up to provide care comfortably, safely, and efficiently to persons with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities can therefore face significant barriers to obtaining high quality health care. Some barriers result from obvious impediments, such as doors without automatic openers and examining tables that are too high. Other barriers arise from faulty communication between patients and health care professionals, including misconceptions among clinicians about the daily lives, preferences, values, and abilities of persons with disabilities. Yet additional barriers relate to health insurance limits on items and services essential to maximizing health and independence. This book examines the health care experiences of persons who are blind, deaf, hard of hearing, or who have difficulties using their legs, arms, or hands. The book then outlines strategies for overcoming or circumventing barriers to care, starting by just asking persons with disabilities about workable solutions. Creating safe and accessible health care for persons with disabilities will likely benefit everyone at some point. This book has three parts. The first part looks at the historical roots of healthcare access for persons with disabilities in the United States. The second part discusses the current situation and the special challenges for those with disabilities. The third part looks forward to discuss the ways in which healthcare quality and access can improve.

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