Ensuring the Reproductive Rights of Women with Intellectual Disability

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Abstract

Background: Women with intellectual disability experience disparities in sexual and reproductive health care services.

Methods: To explore perceptions of caring for persons with disability, including individuals with intellectual disability, we conducted open-ended individual interviews with 20 practising physicians and three video-based focus group interviews with an additional 22 practising physicians, which reached data saturation. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. We used conventional content analysis methods to analyse transcripts.
Result: Physicians indicated that intellectual disability can pose challenges to providing sexual and reproductive health care. Observations coalesced around four themes: (1) communication; (2) routine preventive care; (3) contraception and sterilisation; and (4) conception and parenthood. Observations raised concerns about equity of access to reproductive care for women with intellectual disability.

Conclusions: In our sample of physicians, we found attitudes that might compromise reproductive care for women with intellectual disability, suggesting that gaps remain in ensuring reproductive rights of women with intellectual disability.

**Keywords:** intellectual disability, disability, reproductive health, reproductive justice, health disparities

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