

Doctors unclear on legal obligations in caring for patients with disability

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(HealthDay)—Practicing physicians might not understand their legal responsibilities when caring for people with disability, which may contribute to inequalities in their care, according to a study published online April 1 in *Health Affairs*.

Nicole D. Agaronnik, from Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, and colleagues interviewed 20 practicing physicians across five specialties to examine the knowledge of their obligations to accommodate patients with disability under federal civil rights law.

The researchers found that in three potentially problematic areas, interviewees reported having had little formal training about their obligations and demonstrated superficial or incorrect understanding of their obligations; these areas were deciding which accommodations their practices should implement, refusing patients with disability, and holding patients accountable for accommodation costs.

"Our findings suggest that physicians have little formal training in legal requirements to provide equitable care to people with disability. Thus, perhaps not surprisingly, our results also suggest that practicing physicians might not fully understand their legal responsibilities when caring for people with disability," the authors write. "Therefore, one critical future direction involves educating physicians on several levels—about disability disparities, their [legal obligation](#) to provide equitable care and reasonable accommodations, and approaches to accommodating disability."

More information: [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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