Disability: Types or categories of disability.

NID Training Disability Diary

- Compiled by Dr Jean Mitchell

Introduction

Models of disability influence the way persons with disabilities are treated. Disabled people form a large and diverse population group that includes those who have physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. Disability arises from the interaction of health conditions with environmental and personal factors and can affect a person at any point during their life. Thus, models and social and environmental factors influence the way disability is categorised. While there are many categories of disability, each one is further described in terms of level and intensity (Maart, Amosun & Jelsma, 2019).

Discussion

There are many types or categories of disability. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) aims to increase awareness, understanding and measurement of disability (WB, 2018).

Some examples of common disabilities you may find are:

- Vision impairment (mild to severe);
- Hearing impairment (mild to profound);
- Mental health conditions (e.g. eating, mood, psychotic, addiction, personality disorders);
- Intellectual disability (e.g. Down's syndrome, foetal alcohol syndrome, epilepsy, cerebral palsy);
- Acquired brain injury (e.g. as a result of trauma to the head, or non-traumatic injury like stroke);
- Autism spectrum disorder (e.g. high functioning, Asperger's syndrome);
- Physical disability (e.g. multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, Carpal tunnel syndrome, amputations and spinal cord injuries).

In the ICF, problems with human functioning are categorized in three interconnected areas:

- Impairments are complications in functions or physical changes of structure of the body – e.g. paralysis or blindness;
- Limitations of executing activities – e.g. walking or eating;
- Participation restrictions – e.g. facing discrimination in employment, difficulty accessing transportation.

The ICF also recognises personal factors, such as motivation and self-esteem, which can influence how much a person participates in society (WB, 2018).

Conclusion

The social model of disability accepted by the South African Government does not locate the "problem" within the person with impairment; rather it acknowledges and emphasises barriers in the environment which disable individuals (Maart, Amosun & Jelsma, 2019). The type of disability and the level and intensity of the impairment needs to be accommodated within the social, educational and economic environment.

For further information about this article contact lientjievanrensburg@nidtraining.org.za

References

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