Nurses with Disability: Transforming Healthcare for All
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Abstract

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and nurses with disability add greatly needed value as our colleagues. People with disability represent the largest marginalized group, making up more than 15% of the global population. Recognizing the value of nurses with disability requires an understanding of the ongoing systematic exclusion of students with disability entering the nursing profession and nurses with disability maintaining employment. Nurses with disability can offer patient-provider concordance, supporting a shared experience, valuing disability, and modeling positive expectations. In this article, we first discuss disability, ableism, and nursing. Also included is information about universal design structures for access that can be useful to support students and nurses with disability in academic and clinical settings. Lastly, we provide recommendations for nursing education and practice to include and value people with disability in these environments. Because systemic barriers can be easy to fix but often ignored, employing nurses with disability who directly experience these barriers provides an opportunity and incentive to advocate for change. Nurses with disability have enormous potential to expand healthcare from a medicalized view of disability as an inherently negative trait to a marker of diversity and the hallmark of equitable care.