

# THE WORLD REPORT ON DISABILITY

*Our clinical articles this month explore meeting the needs of people with disabilities in Jamaica. It is easy to focus on wheelchair seating and mobility in the United States, such as the latest funding cuts or new legislation and policy. Taking a step back to examine the global picture gives us new perspective, context, and motivation in each of our roles.*

The first World Report on Disability was released in 2011 by The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank. Per this report, more than a billion people worldwide have a disability. The report also indicates that people with disabilities “have generally poorer health, lower education achievements, fewer economic opportunities and higher rates of poverty.” The report provides evidence for potential solutions and concludes with recommended actions for governments. Per WHO, this report makes a “significant contribution to implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.”

As professionals working with people who have disabilities, it is helpful to have this information at our fingertips for education, funding, and advocacy. The report is 350 pages long, but this column will summarize some of the key findings.

1. Over a billion people live with some form of disability. That is about 15 percent of the world’s population. Between 110 and 190 million adults have very significant limitations in functioning (2 to 4 percent). Rates are increasing due to aging and a global increase in chronic health conditions.
2. Lower-income countries have a higher incidence of disability. Disability is more common among women, older people, children and adults who are poor.
3. Worldwide, one-third of non-disabled people cannot afford health care. However, one-half of people with disabilities are unable to afford this care. People with disabilities are more than twice as likely to find health care providers’ skills inadequate, four times as likely to be treated poorly and three times as likely to be denied care.
4. Children with disabilities are less likely to attend school, particularly in poorer countries.
5. People with disabilities are less likely to be employed. Globally, employment rates are 53 percent for men with disabilities compared to 65 percent for men without disabilities and 20 percent for women with disabilities compared to 30 percent for women without disabilities. In more developed countries, the employment rate for people with disabilities was 44 percent, compared to 75 percent for people without disabilities.
6. People with disabilities are vulnerable to poverty because of extra costs including medical care, assistive devices and personal support in comparison with people without disabilities with similar incomes.

7. Rehabilitation services are inadequate in many countries. In four South African countries, only 26 to 55 percent of people received the medical rehabilitation needed and only 17 to 37 percent received the assistive devices they needed.

8. People with disabilities can live and participate in the community. In the United States, 70 percent of adults with disabilities rely on family and friends for assistance with daily activities. In high-income countries, 20 to 40 percent of people with disabilities do not have their needs met for assistance with everyday activities.

9. Per the World Report on Disability, governments can promote access to services; invest in specific programs; adopt a national strategy and plan of action; improve provider education, training and recruitment; provide adequate funding; increase public awareness and understanding; strengthen research and data collection; and ensure the involvement of people with disabilities in implementation of policies and procedures.

10. More than 150 countries and organizations have signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and more than 130 have ratified it. The treaty was adopted December 13, 2006, by the United Nations and is based on the Americans with Disabilities Act. The United States signed this on July 30 2009, but has not yet ratified it.

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RESOURCES AND REFERENCES:  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION WORLD REPORT ON DISABILITY [HTTP://WWW.WHO.INT/DISABILITIES/WORLD\\_REPORT/2011/EN/](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/)