

"Practical Strategies for Delivering Neuroinclusive Healthcare: Bridging the Double Empathy Problem"

Webinar presented by Mel Houser, M.D., Executive Director, All Brains Belong VT (6/11/2024)

Part 1: The status quo of healthcare is failing neurodivergent patients

Neurodivergent patients struggle to access healthcare

- 79.8% of autistic adults have difficulty accessing primary medical care (Doherty et al 2020)
- 63-69% of autistic adults have untreated health conditions (Doherty et al 2022)
- ADHD patients also struggle to access healthcare (Young et al 2021)
- These patients experience high rates of healthcare dissatisfaction and traumatic healthcare experiences. Many do not feel safe accessing healthcare.

Types of barriers to healthcare access (Raymaker et al 2017; Doherty et al 2020; Doherty et al 2022)

- Environment
- Provider knowledge, skills, attitudes
- Systemic barriers

Neurodivergent patients die prematurely

- Autistic adults: Life expectancy 36-54 years - leading causes: premature cardiovascular disease and suicide
- ADHD adults: 4x increased risk of premature death

Part 2: All Brains Belong's model for neuroinclusive healthcare

Description of the All Brains Belong model

- Medical care integrated into social connection, employment support, education
- Uses existing structures - accept health insurance, focus on access
- Universal design for healthcare

Process of ongoing co-creation with the patient community we serve

→ systems change from the ground up

- ["Everything is Connected to Everything: Improving the Healthcare of Autistic & ADHD Adults"](#) project
- Methods for ongoing participatory engagement

Part 3: 5 strategies for improving the healthcare experiences of neurodivergent patients

Universal design - offering everything in multiple, flexible ways

Strategies identified by All Brains Belong patients as particularly helpful (n=70):

1. Adapt the environment
 - Examples of "everyday" adaptations - lighting, furniture, movement, temperature, setting
2. Support communication
 - During appointment
 - Between appointments
3. Support executive functioning
 - During appointment
 - Between appointments
4. Tools to support the constellation of intertwined medical conditions commonly impacting autistic/ADHD adults
 - Example medical conditions that belong to this constellation / cluster
 - Walk-through of the ["Everything is Connected"](#) free resources for patients and clinicians
5. COVID considerations
 - Neurodivergent patients are at higher risk for complications from COVID
 - Many patients are avoiding healthcare for fear of getting COVID *while accessing healthcare*
 - Strategies for COVID risk mitigation in healthcare settings - masks, ventilation, filtration

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