

"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)

Plain Language Summary

The Problem with Healthcare for Neurodivergent Patients

Neurodivergent patients, like those with autism and ADHD, face many problems getting healthcare. Almost 80% of autistic adults have trouble getting basic medical care, and many have untreated health issues. ADHD patients also struggle with getting healthcare. Many of these patients are unhappy with their healthcare and have had bad experiences. They often do not feel safe when trying to get care.

They face barriers like:

- **Environment:** Healthcare places can be overwhelming.
- **Provider Knowledge and Attitudes:** Many doctors don't know how to help neurodivergent patients.
- **Systemic Issues:** The healthcare system often doesn't meet the needs of neurodivergent people.

These problems mean neurodivergent patients often don't live as long. Autistic adults often die between the ages of 36 and 54, mainly from heart disease and suicide. Adults with ADHD have a four times higher risk of dying young.

All Brains Belong's Model for Neuroinclusive Healthcare

All Brains Belong VT is creating a new way to give healthcare. Our model combines medical care with social connection, job support, and education. We also use "universal design." This means that we provide healthcare in different ways to meet everyone's needs.

We work with our patient community to create these systems together, making changes from the ground up. One project, "[Everything is Connected to Everything: Improving the Healthcare of Autistic & ADHD Adults](#)," focuses on working with patients to improve care.

5 Strategies for Better Healthcare for Neurodivergent Patients

1. **Adapt the Environment:** Making changes to things like lighting, furniture, movement, and temperature to make healthcare settings more comfortable.
2. **Support Communication:** Helping patients communicate during and between appointments.
3. **Support Executive Functioning:** Helping patients organize and manage their healthcare during and between appointments.
4. **Tools for Intertwined Conditions:** Providing tools to help with the medical conditions that often come with autism and ADHD. They offer free resources for patients and doctors.
5. **Protect patients from COVID:** Neurodivergent patients are at higher risk for COVID complications. Many avoid healthcare out of fear of catching COVID. Strategies like using masks, improving ventilation, and air filtration can help reduce these risks in healthcare settings.

By listening to neurodivergent patients and making needed changes, All Brains Belong VT is working to create a better, more inclusive healthcare system for everyone.

All Brains Belong offers training and consultations for healthcare practices, employers, and a wide range of organizations. For more information, visit <https://allbrainsbelong.org/education>