

Medical students' perceptions of people with disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Little is known about associations of attitudes of medical students towards people with disabilities and their life satisfaction and empathy.

Purpose: To assess the social perception of people with disabilities by medical students.

Materials and methods: The present study interviewed 451 medical students of the Medical University of Białystok regarding their perceptions of people with disabilities, especially in light of their own satisfaction with life and empathy. We used the following questionnaires: the original questionnaire about attitudes towards people with disabilities, The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and Empathy Understanding Questionnaire (KRE).

Results: Attitudes towards people with disabilities people were generally positive. Almost 40% of respondents expressed a willingness to help for people with disabilities. In general, disabled people

do not have full access to all fields of social (63.4%) and professional (63.2%) life. At the same time, disabled people tend to marry (84.9%), have children (82.1%), work (88.2%), and drive cars (76.1%). Respondents were convinced that contact with a disabled person teaches ways to help others (42.1%), and in fact 58.6% of respondents reported having decided to participate with helping the disabled. The average life satisfaction of the students was 22.7 ± 5.3 which indicates that the respondents are satisfied with their lives. The empathy level of respondents was 66.97 points ± 2.98 , which indicates average level of empathy.

Conclusions: This study shows that students' perception of people with disabilities depends upon how the students viewed disabled people's, life satisfaction and empathy.

Key words: Medical students, attitudes, people with disabilities, life satisfaction, empathy

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