Introduction

Currently in the United States, there are more than 4.6 million individuals with an intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD). This population is incredibly diverse with a myriad of complex health needs. According to the Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities (2005), there is a public health crisis occurring among Americans who identify as disabled. In particular, the population with IDD has both a significantly increased risk of secondary health conditions such as mental health problems, oral health issues and obesity, and decreased access to health promotion and education programs.

Obstacles and Methods

The following paper seeks to explore the accessibility of online resources for healthy living conditions common to people with developmental disabilities. The major topics addressed in this paper are gleaned from the Healthy People 2010 report produced by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. The report, which states the narrowing of the health disparity via reduction of secondary conditions in adults with IDD as one of its major goals, articulates ten public health concerns for the decade (HP2010, 2000, II, p. 6.3). A literature review corroborates that these topics are relevant to individuals with IDD.

The topics and associated government resources are as follows:

- Nutrition and Obesity: choosemyplate.gov
- Physical Activity: fitness.gov
- Oral Hygiene: cdc.gov/oralhealth
- Reproductive Health: womenshealth.gov
- Mental Health: mentalhealth.gov
- Tobacco Use: smokefree.gov
- Substance Abuse: drugabuse.gov
- Injury and Violence: cdc.gov/injury
- Environmental Quality: epa.gov/healthyhome
- Access to Healthcare: healthcare.gov

Accessibility was assessed via three methods:

1. WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool will be applied to the homepage of each site
2. Functional Accessibility Evaluation (FAE) will be applied to three levels of the domain, including subdomains and links
3. Search for disability-related terms. The terms “disability,” “developmental disability,” and “intellectual disability” will be entered into the search bar and the number of results will be recorded.

Discussion

Ultimately, this study has found that online federal resources addressing major preventative health concerns often experienced by individuals with developmental disabilities have navigated the area of technological accessibility fairly well. The format appears to be largely accessible, although areas of concern include images, HTML standards, and ensuring that structural elements are compatible with accessibility software and techniques used by individuals with IDD. Collectively, however, these resources are not actively addressing the population with IDD, and therefore may be limiting the reach of the health promotion materials presented. By increasing the accessibility and specificity of online health promotion materials regarding the preventable conditions that prove costly and oftentimes deadly for individuals with IDD, the federal agencies responsible for disseminating this information may save billions of dollars in healthcare costs—including federal aid—and significantly increase the quality of life for millions of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities around the country.

Bibliography


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Disability in the Social Context (PSI)