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“Co-existence” in a healthcare environment

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EDITORIAL ARTICLE

"CO-EXISTENCE" IN A HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT

Health is universally recognized as a fundamental human right. Nevertheless, vast segments of the global population continue to experience significant mental and physical health challenges due to persistent and deeply rooted health inequalities. These systemic disparities—shaped by structural inequities and socioeconomic deprivation—lead to profound and unjust differences in health outcomes, disproportionately affecting individuals from low-income backgrounds and socially marginalized groups. These inequities are driven by broader social determinants of health, including economic status, access to material and social resources, and the distribution of power across global, national, and local levels. Individuals facing such adverse conditions are often placed at a systemic disadvantage, with restricted opportunities and limited access to essential healthcare services, ultimately perpetuating cycles of poor health and social exclusion.¹

The well-being of any society is inherently connected to the well-being of the individuals who comprise it. Research suggests that people who perceive their lives as meaningful tend to live longer, experience better physical health, and report higher levels of happiness compared to those who lack a sense of purpose. Meaning in life represents a fundamental psychological need that not only enhances overall well-being but also mitigates the risk of depression and is positively associated with physical health and longevity. At its core, human existence is oriented toward fostering social flourishing. In this context, individuals increasingly advocate for the reduction of health inequalities, while healthcare teams are adopting patient-centered approaches aimed at bridging the informational gap between patients and clinicians—an essential step toward achieving shared decision-making.²

Recognizing and addressing health inequalities is a crucial step toward establishing inclusive, person-centered healthcare practices. Such practices are tailored to individuals' identities, values, and needs thereby promoting equitable access to high-quality care for all population groups.³

Effective communication plays a central role in this context, as it fosters mutual respect and is often shaped by environmental and personal experiences. In healthcare settings, effective communication refers to the meaningful exchange of information, emotions, and perspectives among healthcare professionals, patients, and other stakeholders in a manner that promotes understanding, trust, and collaboration. Upholding the principles of respect, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity not only enhances the quality of patient care but also contributes to the creation of a more equitable and responsive healthcare system.⁴

Culturally responsive communication constitutes a cornerstone of high-quality healthcare, encompassing sensitivity to linguistic, cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious diversity. However, the mere inclusion of diversity is not an endpoint. Rather, it represents an ongoing commitment to equitable collaboration with all social groups, without exclusion. While diverse teams bring valuable perspectives, they may also face increased challenges in cohesion and communication compared to more homogeneous groups, where shared backgrounds may facilitate smoother interactions.

In this context, the focus must remain on ensuring patient safety, promoting effective communication between care teams and patients, and enabling timely and meaningful patient participation in decision-making processes—regardless of background or status.⁵

To meet these demands, healthcare professionals must possess specialized knowledge and skills that allow them to function effectively in diverse environments and under conditions of high workload. Clarity and compliance in role distribution is essential to coordinated action and shared goals. Crucially, leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering coexistence within the healthcare environment. It is through strong leadership that a climate of mutual trust, collaboration, and effective communication can be cultivated, guiding team members toward a unified purpose.⁶

Healthcare professionals must consistently strive to implement practices that are inclusive of socially excluded or underserved groups. Active participation is a core tenet of person-centered care and should be embedded across all levels of healthcare systems and organizational structures. However, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of "diversity" may elicit negative emotional responses from some individuals. This reaction often stems from personal experiences in which the term has been associated with perceived disadvantages, exclusion, or tension, leading to emotional resistance or misunderstanding.

Despite such responses, diversity holds significant potential to promote excellence and drive innovation. The inclusion of individuals with varied backgrounds, identities, and perspectives enhances problem-solving, promotes adaptability, and supports the long-term sustainability of inclusive practices across healthcare systems. Developing a culture of collaboration, teamwork, and acceptance requires a steadfast commitment to adopting inclusive approaches that strengthen communication and information exchange—cornerstones of safe and effective care.

To this end, healthcare professionals must be empowered through educational programs that focus on:

- upholding justice and ethical standards;
- demonstrating flexibility, open-mindedness, and the ability to navigate change; and
- cultivating a consistent commitment to clinical and professional excellence.

Ultimately, healthcare services must not only aim for efficiency and quality but also ensure that care is inclusive, responsive, and equitable for all.

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