Abstract

People with intellectual disabilities remain among the most vulnerable members of society and often face many barriers to healthcare. They experience major health problems and risks yet pay a ‘disability penalty’, the result of social exclusion, discrimination and isolation. If public health strategies are to address the physical and mental health needs of people with intellectual disabilities, attention needs to be given to their particular health profile. Health targets, quality standards and outcome measures must attend to their needs, for the measure of civilisation is how well we treat those who are deemed more vulnerable and less able in society. This article highlights how these issues are being addressed in ‘westernised’ countries and some of the dilemmas and challenges faced by health care organisations.

Keywords

physical health; mental health; intellectual disability;
quality; standards