**This information is under embargo until 4:00pm on Tuesday, July 26, 2022.**

**Healthcare Researchers Launch DocsWithDisabilities: An Initiative to Support the Inclusion of Disabled Individuals in Medicine**

Ann Arbor, MI, July 26, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- Tomorrow, On the heels of the 32nd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act, Dr. Lisa Meeks, an assistant professor of Learning Health Sciences and Family Medicine at the University of Michigan, and her team, launched the [DocsWithDisabilities](https://www.docswithdisabilities.org/) Initiative, a first-of-its-kind coordinated effort to systematically improve the inclusion of disabled individuals in health professions education.

*“With generous support from the Ford Foundation, our team, along with our collaborators, are able to grow the initiative, expanding and exponentially increasing its reach and impact on disability inclusion in medicine,”* said Dr. Meeks.

DocsWithDisabilities works to increase the number of healthcare providers with disabilities, address the disability access gaps in healthcare education and practice for people with disabilities, and expand education and awareness about disability inclusion.

**The** [**DocsWithDisabilities**](https://www.docswithdisabilities.org/) **initiative has four main goals:**

* **Elevate People** through shared stories of physicians, nurses, and medical professionals with disabilities, in their own words.
* **Foster Awareness** by increasing the visibility of disabled healthcare providers.
* **Build Community** by creating a virtual space for people to connect and support one another in their journeys.
* **Impact Inclusion** through our research and educational initiatives, informing policy and best practice.

This year, the initiative is launching several programs aimed at increasing the number of doctors with disabilities in the physician workforce and addressing current barriers in training. These barriers, many of which highlight the need for more research, include lack of mentorship, knowledge of reasonable accommodations in clinical settings, and the impact of long covid on the physician workforce.

*"The ADA was passed 32 years ago, and careers in the medical profession have remained largely unachievable for disabled people, including those currently facing the challenge of living with long COVID. DocsWithDisabilities is a radical transformation in the power dynamic of our current medical system. Disabled people's voices must be respected and followed within every aspect of health care, whether patients, providers, or both. And providers with disabilities and chronic illnesses should be connected in a network of peer support and advocacy. The Ford Foundation is proud to support DocsWithDisabilities, whose critical work is leading the charge to end systemic ableism in the health care profession and better meet the needs of our diverse and dynamic community,”* **– Rebecca Cokley, Program Officer for U.S. Disability Rights at the Ford Foundation**

To accomplish these goals, DocsWithDisabilities is collaborating with several organizations, including [the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)](https://www.aamc.org/), the [Stanford Medicine Alliance for Disability Inclusion and Equity](https://med.stanford.edu/smadie.html) (SMADIE), the Association of Medical Professionals with Hearing Losses (AMPHL), the Johns Hopkins Disability Health Research Center, and the [Coalition for Disability Access in Health Science Education](https://www.hsmcoalition.org), initially co-founded by Dr. Meeks.

*“The AAMC is committed to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive physician workforce, and that includes people with disabilities. We are pleased to support the DocsWithDisabilities Initiative in its efforts to address and remove common barriers in training and to provide a platform for improving disability inclusion*.” **– David J. Skorton, MD, AAMC President and CEO**

*“Sharing the stories of healthcare providers with disabilities helps directly combat stereotypes about disability and reshape the narrative. SMADIE is thrilled to support and endorse this highly impactful work.”* **– Peter D. Poullos, MD, Clinical Associate Professor of Radiology and Medicine, Founder and Director, Stanford Medicine Alliance for Disability Inclusion and Equity (SMADIE)**

*“Disability inclusion among healthcare professionals is a necessary step to addressing the barriers and inequities that people with disabilities face within healthcare settings. These efforts require a holistic and data-driven approach that is informed by the disability community.”* **– Bonnie Swenor, PhD, MA Director, Johns Hopkins Disability Health Research Center**

*“People with disabilities, including deaf and hard of hearing people, experience significant inequities, not only in accessing healthcare but also in becoming practicing clinicians. AMPHL is honored to partner with the DocsWithDisabilities Initiative to reimagine the delivery of health sciences education and healthcare.”* **– Chris Moreland, MD-MPH, President, Association of Medical Professionals with Hearing Losses (AMPHL)**

**The Initiative’s widespread commitments to support disability inclusion span several new programs.** For more information on the DocsWithDisabilities Initiative please visit [www.docswithdisabilities.org](http://www.docswithdisabilities.org). You can also follow the initiatives work on Twitter at @DocsWith.