

## Correspondence

# Of ensuring equitable participation of persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic

### ABSTRACT

The recent pandemic has affected everyone's participation to their meaningful tasks that shape one's role and overall identity. Such situation tends to be more complex and challenging for persons with disabilities whose participation to the social and economic fabric of one's community has been limited even prior to the pandemic due to ongoing attitudinal barriers. The call towards a more inclusive and responsive healthcare service delivery, which includes rehabilitation programs, should be institutionalized in order for them to have an access and a fair chance to participate and to contribute despite the restrictions of the pandemic.

**Keywords** disability, public health

### To the Editor,

The COVID-19 pandemic has stifled many social institutions and structures related to health, education and business among others. It has prompted everyone to make quick and effective adaptations to survive and if the conditions are ideal, to participate in the social and economic fabric of one's community. Its overall effect has permeated to our personal take on how we perceive our environment and our day-to-day lives. In *'The Collateral Damage of COVID-19'*<sup>1</sup>, the editor has presented the current inequities that majority of people are experiencing when it comes to participating in meaningful tasks such as schooling and working. It was reiterated that the privilege related to access and accommodation are not enjoyed by everyone causing greater complications on top of the challenges attached with the pandemic.

However, the vulnerable population, which includes person with disabilities would even have a harder time accessing needed healthcare services and on top of it participate in meaningful tasks that shape one's role and identity given all the current restrictions. Such predicament and call have been emphasized in *'Lessons from COVID19: advocacy toward the vulnerable'*<sup>2</sup>. There must be a recalibration of one's moral and ethical compass in relation to the service delivery in ensuring that concerted efforts are in place to protect the welfare of the disabled. Better healthcare conditions adherent to state regulations and protocols should be institutionalized as a form of solidarity and cohesion for those whose participation has been hindered even pre-pandemic due to attitudinal barriers and prevailing social stigma.

Currently, accessing various services such as rehabilitation programs is challenging for them. This is because of the disruptive changes in community access and availability of resources. Staple components of these programs include managing ongoing and newly acquired physical, cognitive, and psychosocial deficits which limit one's activity participation and assumption of various social roles. It must be continuously emphasized that access to these programs is a right and with such comes the thrust of promoting their chance to function and to participate despite deficits and limitations<sup>3</sup> even during the pandemic.

All things considered, the social determinants of health cannot be discounted especially now wherein everything is intertwined—social norms and attitudes, networks, and cultural environment<sup>4</sup>. Without the presence of citizens who advocate for better living conditions and more inclusive and equitable participation in society of persons with disabilities, this pandemic would further provide barriers preventing them to contribute, to effect changes, and for once to take up space.

### Acknowledgment

No funding was received from this paper.

### Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest in this paper.

## References

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Kim Gerald G. Medallon

Department of Occupational Therapy, University of Santo  
Tomas, Manila, Philippines

Address correspondence to Kim Gerald G. Medallon,

E-mail: [kgmedallon@ust.edu.ph](mailto:kgmedallon@ust.edu.ph).

doi: 10.1093/pubmed/fdaa281