

DHERN October 2025 Newsletter

DHERN Announcements

- Send in your nominations for the DHERN 2025 Paper Award Competition!
 - a. We will provide two awards. The nominee must be the first author on the paper (co-authorship is permitted with student or faculty co-author(s)). The primary focus of the paper should relate to disability health equity, broadly defined. The paper must have been published or accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal in 2024 or 2025, and the nominee must have been at one of the following levels of education/training at the time the paper was published or accepted for publication: undergraduate student, graduate student, postdoctoral researcher.
 - b. Each awardee will receive a \$500 honorarium for presenting their paper at the DHERN meeting on Tuesday, January 27, 2026, 2:00-3:00pm ET.
 - c. One entry is permitted per nominee. Self-nominations will be accepted. **The deadline for nominations is 5:00pm on Wednesday, December 3, 2025.**
 - d. Email published paper to sdlandes@syr.edu. Cover letter is not required. If the paper's connection to disability health equity is not obvious, you are invited to include a brief (up to 200 words) description of how the paper addresses disability health equity.
- **Save the date for the annual Paper Award Competition Presentations** on Tuesday, January 27th, 2:00 to 3:00 pm ET! Each awardee will share a summary of their paper.
- Thank you to the presenters and attendees for making the 2025 DHERN Conference, "Global Perspectives on Disability Equity", a success! Recordings of our fantastic panels will be available on our website soon. Stay tuned!
- If you would like to contribute to our work advancing disability health equity research, connecting researchers and trainees, and fostering the inclusion of disabled people in these efforts, you can [make a donation](#) to help sustain DHERN's mission.
- Share your recent publications, upcoming events, job opportunities with the DHERN community! To contribute to the next newsletter, please send details to us at dhern@jh.edu by the 28th of October.

Study Recruitment

- The TIRR–Memorial Hermann Spinal Cord Injury and Disability Research Center, in collaboration with the University of Montana and the University of Texas Health Science Center, is conducting a research study to understand the impact of difficult and/or abusive relationships on the health of people with spinal cord injury (SCI). Individuals aged 21 or

older who have had a traumatic SCI for at least one year, live in the U.S., and can communicate in English may be eligible. Participation involves a brief phone screening and completing a one-time survey, either online or by mail. Participants will receive a small payment for completing the survey. This study is led by Jessica Rodriguez at TIRR–Memorial Hermann. For questions, contact SCIPStudy@uth.tmc.edu or 713-797-7245.

- The Independence Care system is conducting a research study to understand the barriers people with physical disabilities face in accessing primary care. Individuals aged 18 years or older, identify as having a physical disability, require an accommodation when accessing primary care, and speak and read English or Spanish may be eligible. Eligible participants will complete a survey about their experience getting primary care at two time points and will be entered into a raffle for a \$20 gift card. For questions or to learn more, contact ICSRResearch@icsny.org or 646-647-6100.

JOBS

- [Disability Policy Research Fellowship](#)
 - a. Northwestern University is accepting applications for a one- or two- year Post-Doctoral Fellowship on Disability Policy Research (DPR). The fellowship provides experiential training, knowledge, and skills in disability policy research with the goal of developing a cohort of experts capable of advancing policies that improve the lives of people with disabilities. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. For more information, contact ryan.splitt@northwestern.edu.

[Disability Data Equity Research Working Group](#) Featured Article

- Newman-Griffis, D., Swenor, B., Valdez, R., & Mason, G. (2024). [Disability Data Futures: Achievable Imaginaries for AI and Disability Data Justice](#). *arXiv*: 2411.03885
 - a. This paper explores how artificial intelligence and data systems intersect with disability, acknowledging the long history of exclusion and oppression embedded in disability-related data practices. The authors argue that without intervention, AI risks perpetuating ableism under the guise of neutrality. Drawing from academic and advocacy perspectives, they propose “achievable imaginaries” for disability data futures rooted in disability justice. These include re-envisioning data practices, centering disabled voices in AI development, and building systems that prioritize equity and collective action. The work highlights pathways for creating inclusive data futures where technology supports, rather than undermines, disability rights and justice.

Disability and Health Journal Featured Article

- Sullivan, D.L. (2025). [The Limited Role of Sex Education and Contraception Use in Unintended Pregnancy by Disability Status Among Young Adults](#). *Disability and Health Journal*, 101960
 - a. Using nationally representative data from the 2011–2019 National Survey of Family Growth, this study examined whether sexual health education and contraception use mediated the relationship between disability status and unintended pregnancy among women ages 15–24. Women with disabilities (WWD) were more likely than peers without disabilities to experience unintended pregnancy, use less effective contraceptive methods, and report lower socioeconomic status. WWD also scored higher on sexual health education receipt, though the content and quality of education may have reflected abstinence- or abuse-focused messages rather than comprehensive instruction. Structural equation modeling showed no mediation effects: neither sexual health education nor contraception use explained the link between disability and unintended pregnancy. The findings suggest that unintended pregnancy among WWD cannot be fully accounted for by these factors, pointing instead to broader structural and accessibility barriers in reproductive healthcare. The study highlights the need for further research across age groups to identify mechanisms driving reproductive inequities and to inform inclusive sexual health interventions.

DHERN Member Submissions

- Park, S., Molton, I., & Bratzke, L. (2025). [Differences in Phenotypic and Functional Aging Trajectories Among People Aging with Disability and the US General Population](#). *The Journals of Gerontology, Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences*, 80 (9).
 - a. Using 2006–2020 Health and Retirement Study data, this study compared phenotypic and functional aging between people aging with disability and the general US population. Findings exhibit that people aging with disability experience premature and accelerated aging, compounded by social disparities (e.g., race, gender, education), underscoring the need for inclusive public policies and disability-informed interventions.
- Park, S., & Molton, I. (2025). [Who Declines, Who Maintains? Trajectories of Physical Function and the Role of Social Determinants of Health in Adults Aging with Physical Disability](#). *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, Series B
 - a. This longitudinal study identified four distinct physical function trajectories using growth mixture modeling among adults with long-term physical disabilities. Individuals in declining trajectories were significantly more likely to face adverse social determinants of health (e.g., lower income, physical barriers to healthcare,

limited community accessibility), alongside disability-related disadvantages such as longer disability duration. These findings underscore how socioeconomic and environmental constraints shape functional decline, highlighting the importance of inclusive healthcare and community environments to promote equity in aging.

From,

The DHERN Team

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