

# Disability and Social Justice in Healthcare

Dr Amy Kavanagh

# Outline

- Introduction
- Understanding disability
- Advocacy
- Nothing About Us Without Us

# About Me

- Born visually impaired with Ocular Albinism
- I am registered severely sight impaired / blind
- I use a long white cane or Guide Dog Ava to aid my mobility
- Activist, freelancer and content creator





## Offensive Healthcare Waste

### Waste Stream Description

Offensive Waste from Human Healthcare

**NON-Infected Wastes ONLY**

### Offensive Healthcare Waste Examples Include

- Incontinence Pads
- Sanitary Waste
- Stoma Bags
- Nappies / Hygiene Wastes
- Faeces
- Gloves, Apron, Gowns from NON-Infected Patient Contact

“It’s not even really about the bin. It shows that I’m an afterthought. An inconvenience when planning toilets. It makes me feel othered, even in the one freaking room in the building that is supposed to be designed FOR me.”

Dr Hannah Barham Brown

# Understanding Disability

# The Social Model of Disability

- The Social Model of Disability holds that people with impairments are 'disabled' by the barriers operating in society that exclude and discriminate against them.
- It states that people have impairments but that the oppression, exclusion and discrimination people with impairments face is *not* an inevitable consequence of having an impairment, but is caused instead by the way society is run and organised.

Inclusion London, The Social Model Factsheet

# UN Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities

“to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.”



# Cultural Model of Disability

“views disability as a site of resistance to socially constructed conceptions of normality.”

# Social Justice Understanding of Disability

- Removing disabling barriers
- Human rights and dignity
- Resistance and celebration

“while environmental modifications and services can and should be adapted wherever possible there are practical disadvantages to impairments that ‘no amount of environmental change can entirely eliminate’”

Tobin Siebers

The medical model is ALSO a series of disciplinary practices aiming towards creating docile disabled bodies:

“who are expected to adjust to their impairments and comply with the prescribed regimen of rehabilitative treatment administered by medical professionals”

French and Swain



Spinal disease and spinal curvature :  
their treatment by suspension and the  
use of the plaster of Paris bandage

by Lewis A. Sayre.  
Date: 1877

**Advocacy**



“You can change your mind about your wishes for labour and birth at any time.”





**Nothing About Us Without Us**

The Enhancing Generalist Skills programme, “social justice and health equity:

“This domain focuses on the clinician’s role in promoting a fair and just society and reducing health inequalities.”

# Social Justice Understanding of Disability

- Removing disabling barriers
- Human rights and dignity
- Resistance and celebration

We need to take the labour of fighting for access to healthcare away from disabled people. We need to give back the dignity of collaboration, support and care.



Follow me on Twitter /  
Instagram:

@BlondeHistorian

Work with me:

[www.amykavanagh.co.uk](http://www.amykavanagh.co.uk)

Check out Guide Dog Ava  
on Twitter / Instagram /  
TikTok

@GuideDogAva