



# Chhayankan (Visual Art)

## What does a healthcare professional look like?

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Received: 09-JAN-2021

Accepted: 11-JAN-2021

Published Online: 01-FEB-2021



When we think of a healthcare professional, how many of us picture a professional with disabilities? When you meet a person with a disability, do you see the person's disability before you see the person? What if they are health professionals with disabilities? How

many of us are quick to associate a disability with a presumed lack of competence? I was intrigued by these questions and went on to read the literature around healthcare professionals with disabilities.

Cite this article as: Raj V. What does a healthcare professional look like? RHiME. 2021;8:8-9.

People with disabilities represent about 15% of the current population in our society as per the World Health Organization's World Report on Disability, but when we look at their representation in the health professions, they are underrepresented.[1]

Conceptually, the so-called "medical model" of disability, which marginalises disability to an individual deficit and can legitimise medical paternalism, is increasingly being replaced by the "social model", which highlights the barriers and prejudices that exclude people with disabilities.[2]

I read reports of many doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, and even medical students with disabilities who are working at the frontline even in this pandemic.[3] Their disabilities may be diverse - visible or invisible - just as they may themselves be from any region in India, or from different castes and religions.

Through my artwork, I wish to salute the

spirit of various candidates with disabilities (hearing impairment, dwarfism, paraplegia, dyslexia, psychological disabilities) who fought the discriminatory guidelines notified by the National Medical Commission and were able to gain admission into medical colleges through judicial activism in India. [4] The presence, in hospitals, of providers with disabilities shreds to pieces the false notion that it is the disability - whether visible or invisible - which is a barrier.

I created this illustration to challenge the unconscious biases about the abilities of health professionals with disabilities, and to draw attention to the lack of diversity and inclusion within the health professions. Visual art is an artistic approach to create awareness and to change attitudes and behavior.[5] We need to focus more on abilities than on limitations.

The next time someone asks us what a healthcare professional looks like, let us not make an unfair assumption.

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**Acknowledgment:** with gratitude to Dr. Satendra Singh, founder of Doctors with Disabilities: Agents of Change, for helping me conceptualise the illustration.