

## CASE STUDY

# Empowering Healthcare: From Research to Practice in Intellectual Disability Health Assessment



### RESEARCH TEAM



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### COLLABORATORS

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### INTRODUCTION

The creation of this **Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)** was motivated by the goal of addressing disparities in health assessments experienced by individuals with intellectual disabilities. It aimed to develop an accessible health assessment framework guided by an emancipatory philosophy, incorporating insights from both individuals with intellectual disabilities and healthcare professionals. The MOOC focused on the nuances of intellectual disabilities, communication challenges, reasonable adjustments in health assessments, and health disparities, specifically tailored for healthcare professionals.

### WHY THIS RESEARCH MATTERS?

- Individuals with intellectual disabilities experience health disparities and a reduction in life expectancy
- People with intellectual disabilities often express dissatisfaction with healthcare encounters
- Higher rates of care delivery in community settings have resulted in higher engagement with local healthcare professionals
- Many practitioners lack sufficient understanding and training in addressing the unique needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities

### WHAT HAS CHANGED AS A RESULT OF THIS RESEARCH?



**Knowledge Creation**

Massive Open Online Course [MOOC]



**Human Capacity**

Training for healthcare professionals



**Practice and Services**

Improvement of care practices and new health assessment tool

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#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES



##### Develop Accessible Framework

Develop an accessible health assessment framework enriched by the lived experiences of individuals with intellectual disabilities, and contributions from healthcare professionals.



##### Advance Health Equity

Address the profound health assessment disparities faced by individuals with intellectual disabilities.



##### Encourage Inclusive Practices

Augment understanding, communication, and the implementation of reasonable adjustments, ultimately fostering inclusive healthcare practices.



##### Promote Wellbeing

Advance the wellbeing of people with intellectual disability.

#### HOW WAS THE RESEARCH TRANSLATED INTO IMPACT?

The creation of a customized MOOC, **"Improving Health Assessment for People with Intellectual Disability,"** effectively bridged the gap between research and healthcare professionals, with 7,500 participants worldwide completing the course.

This MOOC was designed to enhance understanding, communication, and the implementation of reasonable adjustments, thereby promoting inclusive healthcare practices.

Quantitative data from course evaluations affirm the program's effectiveness, statistics reflect meaningful change among healthcare professionals.

#### IMPACT AT A GLANCE

The MOOC was completed by  
**7,500**  
healthcare professionals from around the world



**Qualitative feedback from the MOOC affirmed its impact with:**

**87.5%** reported a change in perspective

**83%** noted a shift in perceptions

**79.2%** indicated a direct contribution to their day-to-day work

**97%** noted satisfaction with the course

**98%** reported gaining new knowledge of which

**68%** applied their learning in daily practice

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#### IMPACT AT A GLANCE

##### Participant Feedback



*"A course like this should really be made mandatory for all healthcare professionals, and it could make a huge difference for the experience and quality of assessments for people with intellectual disability."*

*"Interesting course. I would hope to bring relevant information back to my work area"*

*"I am profoundly grateful for all the knowledge I got with this course. I feel a lot more comfortable about communicating with someone who has an intellectual disability. Thank you!"*

#### HOW WAS THE RESEARCH TRANSLATED INTO IMPACT?

Its effectiveness in addressing knowledge gaps and transforming clinical practices is underscored by its role in developing a health assessment tool for practitioners. The project engaged a broad spectrum of healthcare professionals—from frontline staff to senior management and policymakers—all working towards the shared goal of improving the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The impact extended to practical applications, exemplified by the project's contribution to the **'My Head to Toe Health Check'** initiative, widely adopted in HSE and Voluntary Bodies Intellectual Disability Service Providers.

Furthermore, the MOOC is embedded in **'Principles of intellectual disability nursing across the lifespan'**, a module on the undergraduate intellectual disability nursing programme at TCD, constituting **40% of the overall assessment**. This module has been completed by **105 intellectual disability nursing students** and the initiative received the Dean's Award for its inclusion in the module.



Completed by  
**105**  
intellectual  
disability  
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#### HOW WAS THE RESEARCH TRANSLATED INTO IMPACT?



The international impact of the project is highlighted through its inclusion amongst **30 worldwide projects** selected for the **Missing Billion Initiative**, as an **exemplar of inclusive good practice on health workers training**, in the **"Reimagining Health Systems that Expect, Accept, and Connect 1 Billion People with Disabilities"** report informing Health Ministries worldwide. At a local level,

the initiative was also shortlisted for for the **TCD Civic Engagement Award** and ultimately Prof. Burke was chosen as the **winner for the prestigious IARSLCE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award with the MOOC as one of her inclusionary examples.**

The researcher's scholarly activities further underscored the project's academic significance and laid the foundation for securing additional funding opportunities. This includes publications like **'Making Reasonable Adjustments,'** which has been cited in **four journals** and extensively discussed on Twitter; significant conference presentations at events such as the **IASSIDD World Congress 2019** and the **IASSIDD European Congress 2021**; invited talks, including the **Person-Centred Care Symposium** at the **Royal College of Physicians Ireland**; and contributions to three successful **EIT grants**, with confirmation of **financial support from the HSE and service partners**, promising strong prospects for future submissions."

*"My goal in creating this course," said Prof. Burke, "is to share techniques that all allied healthcare professionals can adapt to their clinical practise, enriching their skills and improving engagement with all patients, ultimately empowering individuals with an intellectual disability to be partners in health."*

#### IMPACT AT A GLANCE

**76**  
countries  
have engaged with  
the programme



The research has played a pivotal role in expanding the Health Fair in Wave 4 and 5 of IDS-TILDA.

**766** participants assessed with a **70%** attendance rate

**27** individual assessments

- physical fitness,
- oral health,
- cardiovascular health,
- musculoskeletal health,
- psychological and
- sensory health

#### UN Sustainable Development Goals

