Living with Disabilities

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Population of Interest: Spinal Cord Injuries (SCI)

We defined our population as those with damage to the spinal cord causing severe enough damage to result in chronic functional impairment. The incidence of SCI in the US is 40 cases per million people, meaning there are 12,500 new SCI in the US each year. The prevalence of SCI in the US is estimated to be 276,000 people, though the exact number may be as low as 240,000 or as high as 337,000.

Discussion:
- Major advocacy issues for individuals with spinal cord injuries:
  - Access to medical care and appropriate complex medical equipment
  - Transportation and access to community resources
  - Equal opportunity in employment
- Role of the Physician:
  - Advocating for patients with disabilities
  - Working with individuals to connect them with the available community resources and community support networks

Service Project: Worcester Public Schools Transitional Program

- Developed meaningful interactive curriculum centered on promoting self-advocacy and empowerment in students when interacting with medical settings.
- Students learned about the major organ systems, and where they are located in the body.
- The older group of students were introduced to the medical interview, and considered what information they wanted to convey to their medical providers, and how best to vocalize and advocate for their needs.

Interprofessional Network:

- Hospital Based Care: Physicians, Nurses, Occupational and Physical Therapists
- Home-Based Care: Nurse Practitioners, Personal Care Assistants

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