



Disability and the Concept of Health

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Abstract: Can disabled people be healthy? What would it mean to say that someone is a healthy disabled person? Is there a way to capture both the idea that disabled people can be healthy and the basic reality that disability is often intimately tied to health - that healthcare is a crucial issue for disabled people, that there are real and serious health complications for many disabilities? These are the questions I want to explore in this paper. In the literature on health - as well as in both popular and medical discussions of health - disability is often presented as the direct contrast to health. Disability is what happens when health is lost. Health is a spectrum, with the very healthy at one end and the disabled and diseased at the other. And so on. In contrast, though, many disabled people consider themselves healthy. And they pursue lots of activities and live the types of lives which we would, in general, consider healthy. That disability should be contrasted with health is certainly a piece dogma. But, as I'll argue, it's not obviously a well-supported one.

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