**CANADIAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL & DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES: CRITICAL PRESENCES & ABSENCES**

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**Objective:** Systematic exploration of the Canadian media news coverage of the impact of COVD-19 on the lives of people with Intellectual and Developmental disabilities (IDD) remains sparse. Media coverage produces cultural artifacts that reflect commonly held beliefs and “valued” societal issues. Further, the ways in which mass media are developed and disseminated play a significant role in the way that social reality is constructed. Analysis of the media coverage of persons with IDD during the COVID-19 pandemic can provide important insights about how persons with IDD have been supported, valued, and viewed during this unique time in history. This purpose of this study is to examine the Canadian media coverage of people labelled with IDD during COVID-19.

**Methods:** Frame analysis was used to analyze 50 English-language Canadian news media articles published during the first phase of COVID-19 between March 2020 and October 2020. Purposeful sampling was used to select articles using Nexis Uni and specific search parameters. The articles returned from this search were reviewed by authors using inclusion/exclusion criteria to ensure they met criteria. To attain a more comprehensive list, this search was supplemented by a Google News search and articles supplemented by the authors’ own social media search.

**Results:** Preliminary findings indicate that the voices of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are largely absent from the media narratives about the impact of COVID-19 and are replaced by narratives presented by family members and community agency “experts”. Further, the initial analysis of the media covered demonstrates that COVID-19 seems to be exaggerating already existing concerns for persons with IDD, including access to information, appropriate accommodation, high quality standard of supports/care, limited communication, and lacking resources such as technology.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** A more nuanced coverage is required to advance the understanding od how the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities experienced by people with Intellectual and developmental disabilities rather than created them. Our findings are also a call to action for journalists to include the voices and thus lived experiences of people with IDD in the Canadian media coverage of issues impacting them and their everyday lives.

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