



## Healthcare needs to step up and address the needs of the disabled

“Our healthcare system and providers, have a strong legal duty to provide accommodations,” said David Lepofsky, this year’s Dr. Hazel Markwell Honourary Lecture in Bioethics and presenter at our 24th Annual Ethics Conference which focuses on Human Rights and Healthcare. Lepofsky a

human rights lawyer and advocate is also a visiting professor of Disability Rights and Legal Education, Osgoode Hall Law School as well as Chair of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance.

His topic, ***Tearing Down the Many Disability Barriers in Ontario’s Health Care System***, was our first presentation in this year’s annual conference series which began on November 2 and runs until November 30.

Lepofsky cited example after example of how the healthcare system is falling short in meeting the needs of those who have disabilities or those requiring accommodations. He also noted that, “so often the world in general is really designed with people without disabilities in mind.”

According to him, it violates the Human Rights Code to fail to provide needed disability-related accommodations, unless an organization can prove that it is impossible to better accommodate a person’s disability without undue hardship. He cited examples that health care providers should consider, such as examining the accessibility of their websites, how patient intake is managed in a waiting room, how much appointment time is allocated to patients who may need extra time because of their disabilities.

Lepofsky noted that 2.6 million people in Ontario have a disability with many disabilities arising in older age. We have an aging population, so it is important to consider the health system’s response to this growing problem.

He believes that change is possible, and small inroads have been made. But it has been too slow and there’s a long way to go. He was clear that, “anything you do to address and remove barriers can be transformative with much of it taking little time and money.”

To learn more, you can listen to his presentation here at <https://youtu.be/LSgHP-dR2Ts> or visit <https://www.aodaalliance.org/>.