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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Convention mandates that “all” students have the right to an education and as such an inclusive educational approach means that in a general education classroom all students are to be treated equally and have access to the same rights and opportunities made available to all of the non-disabled students. Teachers and school staff are therefore responsible for ensuring that “all” students’ needs are accommodated.

Most research on inclusive education has focused on children with physical disabilities and cognitive impairments however little attention has been devoted to the school experiences of children with chronic diseases and the impact of those experiences on their family members. A chronic disease is characterized as a recurring long term condition that lasts for more than three months and can be controlled but is not curable. Cancer, diabetes, juvenile idiopathic arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease are a few examples of less visible diseases.

The prevalence of chronic childhood diseases in schools suggests that teachers and school should be trained to meet the needs of children who have a variety of diseases. If teachers remain unaware of the problems that exist among their students, then it may be difficult for them to be effective teachers if they are not properly prepared for these student populations.

Children with chronic diseases require special accommodations while attending inclusive school settings because of the fluctuating physical symptoms and the side effects from their medications. Merely including these children in general education classrooms does not guarantee them educational success.

OBJECTIVE OF THE BOOK

In order to foster school success for these children it is important that teachers understand the etiology of multiple chronic diseases and how to best provide ongoing support to them and their families while at school.

This book is an international collaboration that presents multiple perspectives on the current state of inclusive education in different countries with a particular emphasis on the issues and challenges in teaching children with chronic diseases. As such, the book serves as an essential resource for pre-service teachers training in the fields of Special and Inclusive Education worldwide. Additionally, the information will contribute to this under researched field of Education. Armed with this knowledge, pre-service
teachers, educators and school administrators around the world will be better equipped to organize and manage their classrooms to meet their students’ special needs and encourage their engagement in learning within inclusive school environments.

**ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK**

There are 15 chapters in this book and the chapters are grouped into five main sections. The five sections assist the reader to be guided to a specific area of interest because each section is based on a particular theme. The sections are divided as follows: Section 1 contains chapters that are focused on providing in-depth information on specific physical disorders. In this section, five chronic diseases (inflammatory bowel disease, cancer, asthma, type 1 diabetes and juvenile idiopathic arthritis) are discussed in detail and explored within the school contexts. Section 2 examines the current state of children’s mental health and emotional well-being at school and the impact of these disorders on students and school staff. Children with chronic health conditions often require special accommodations at school. In Section 3, the chapters investigate the main educational policies that govern how children with disabilities needs are supposed to be met within inclusive school settings. Additionally, the ways in which parents advocate for their sick children’s rights in relation to these policies is presented. Many of the education policies cite that all children have the right to an education but what remains debatable is how that education is to be delivered particularly for children with chronic diseases at school. Arguments for and against various educational settings are explored in Section 4. Section 5 closes the book on a positive note by providing recommendations and practical solutions to many of the school challenges and obstacles that had been mentioned in the previous chapters. Insights and effective methodological approaches are supplied to assist teachers, school staff and parents to better help children with chronic diseases at school to attain their full potential within inclusive classroom settings.

**Section 1: School Experiences of Children with Physical Chronic Diseases**

**Chapter 1: The School Experiences of Children with Inflammatory Bowel Disease**

In this chapter, the school experiences of students with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is explored. IBD is a chronic disease and children that have the disease require special accommodations at school. In order to best understand their school experiences a qualitative case study with six students between the ages of seven and 18 was performed. Study findings from their individual interviews are presented. Additionally, a discussion of the value in seeking children’s perspectives of their school experiences in research is explored. The chapter also offers an overview of the Quebec educational system and the policies that govern special needs education in Quebec and Canada. The chapter closes with the children’s recommendations for teachers and school personnel.

**Chapter 2: The Experience of Cancer and Asthma in the Pediatric Patient: A Family Physician’s Perspective**

Asthma and cancer are examples of two chronic diseases that do affect many children worldwide. This chapter provides medical insights from a family physician’s perspective. He has practised family medi-
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cine for over 36 years in three different countries (France, Israel and Canada). His firsthand accounts of the various protocols for treating and caring for children with asthma and children with cancer are explored from an international perspective. This chapter concludes with recommendations for teachers and educators that may have students with these chronic diseases in their classrooms.

Chapter 3: Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus in the Inclusive School Setting

A detailed overview of type one diabetes mellitus is described in this chapter. Educators will also benefit from learning how to identify the signs and symptoms of a potential diabetic emergency so that should one occur they will be more prepared to act which is valuable information to have especially in school settings. Moreover, ways to gain access to services for children with type one diabetes mellitus at school is explored. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the school experiences of children with type one diabetes mellitus.

Chapter 4: Teaching a Child with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA)

Juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) in children can be a very painful debilitating disease as children must endure joint stiffness and painful inflammation while at school. The authors of this chapter highlight the challenges that children with JIA face when at school. The benefits of having the involvement of a multidisciplinary team (health professionals) that includes a school partnership (teachers and parents) is discussed. This is an effective way of supporting school success for children with JIA.

Section 2: The Mental Health of Children at School

Chapter 5: Supporting Students’ Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being in Inclusive Classrooms

This chapter brings to the fore a topic that is rarely discussed and that is the topic of mental health and emotional well-being of school children. Schools are reporting a rise in the number of children that are either in psychological distress, emotional crisis or both. In this chapter, the relationship between children’s mental health issues and the role of school personnel is explored and discussed from different perspectives. The main question being examined is should the onus be on teachers to attend to their students mental and emotional well-being? In this way, teachers would not only be hired to educate students academically but also serve as primary mental health workers. Their new role would require additional training and the chapter examines how this could impact the school environment.

Chapter 6: Living with ADHD: Timing Perceptions and Their Applicability to the Experience of ADHD

The number of children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at school has significantly increased. ADHD is a developmental neuropsychiatric disorder and children with this mental condition find it difficult to focus and to complete their school work. These children have great difficulty remaining seated for any length of time. The chapter explains ADHD and offers alternative
solutions and interventions that teachers and parents can consider rather than relying solely on medication. The author proposes that by understanding the concept of timing, professionals will be able to be more affective in teaching and working with children with ADHD.

Section 3: Polices in Education and Parental Involvement at school

Chapter 7: Parents as Advocates for Children with Inflammatory Bowel Disease at School

Parents occupy important roles in the school lives of children with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). Findings from a qualitative study conducted with five parents that had a child with IBD were interviewed. The parents overwhelmingly stated that their main responsibility was to serve as advocates for their child with IBD at school. The chapter details the journey that parents embark on to gain access to services and accommodations for their child with IBD. The chapter concludes with recommendations to assist teachers and parents.

Chapter 8: Parent Involvement in the Education of Children with Chronic Diseases: Working and Sharing for Children

There are numerous research studies in the field of education that support the role of parents as key components to the educational success of children with chronic diseases. However, sometimes the parent-teacher relationship is at odds. Solutions to strengthen the sometimes fractured relationship are presented so that all the adults involved become champions for the sick child’s academic attainment.

Chapter 9: Challenges for Children with Special Health Needs at the Time of Transition to School

A period of transition can be difficult for anyone but more so for children. Healthy children struggle with transitions in their daily school routines. So imagine how much more difficult it would be for a child that has a special need. Moving from place to place at different times could become quite challenging. In this chapter, the authors examine the difficulties for children with illnesses to transition from pre-school to kindergarten. These children’s special needs are such that transitioning requires more than just physically having the child moved from one building to another. Rather the complexity of transitioning is explained and the coordinating of multiple services and professional staff is considered for sick children.

Section 4: The Educational Rights of Children with Chronic Diseases

Chapter 10: The Educational Rights of Children with Chronic Diseases

Children with chronic diseases or disabilities require special accommodations and access to a variety of services at school. In order to gain access, students, parents and teachers should have a solid understanding of the educational laws and policies that regulate and govern admission to these services. The chapter
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describes some of the central laws and services in the United States (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Family and Educational Rights Privacy Act and IDEA) and explains how to navigate them to ensure appropriate service delivery at school.

Chapter 11: Educating Students with Chronic Illness: A Case Study Demonstrating How the Old Service-Delivery Model Fails

A single case study can be powerful. This chapter presents the story of a middle school student in the United States who had a severe chronic health condition yet wanted to pursue their right to a public education. In this situation, the right for a child to receive a free education was challenged. The complexities of the student’s illness coupled with the myriad of educational laws and policies demonstrate how laws can either assist or hinder school access. When a student’s chronic condition is severe, how far are schools willing to go to accommodate these students and their special needs? This debate is the main focus of the chapter. The author presents multiple perspectives to this intricate and contentious situation that families occasionally must face.

Chapter 12: Imagining Social Equity

The old adage “it takes a village to raise a child” is reflected in this chapter. The author argues that the best way to serve a child with special needs is for professionals emanating from diverse disciplines to unite and work collaboratively in multidisciplinary teams. It is these teams that are needed to seek solutions for the many challenges that plague the fields of Special and Inclusive Early Childhood Education in Australia.

Section 5: Recommendations and Approaches for Educating Children with Chronic Diseases

Chapter 13: Case Studies of Chronically Ill Children: Implications for School Personnel

In today’s regular classroom it is not uncommon to have at least one student that may be suffering from a chronic disease. In Chapter 13, readers are given intimate access inside the lives of children with chronic diseases and their families. Their lived experiences are shared and form an entry point for teachers, school staff and administrators to hear about the many trials and tribulations experienced by families at school. At the end of the chapter, the authors provide a unique experience for readers by listing questions to facilitate group discussions or to assist the reader to engage in deeper reflection.

Chapter 14: Using Children’s Literature to Support Social-Emotional Growth in the Classroom: A Bibliotherapeutic Approach to Education about Chronic Disease

Books and the stories within them can be used as powerful tools for engaging and assisting children. Bibliotherapy is described in this chapter as a tool that can be used to assist the social-emotional needs
of children with chronic health conditions at school. How is bibliotherapy used? The chapter describes what bibliotherapy is and presents the practical implications for educators to use bibliotherapy in their classrooms and at school.

Chapter 15: A Cognitive Augmentative Communication
System for Special Needs Education

Can you imagine living without being able to communicate? How would that impact your quality of life? The authors of this chapter have devised a method to assist with the basic communication and cognitive needs of children in the Arab world that have hearing impairments, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Down Syndrome (DS) or other Intellectual Disabilities (ID). The authors propose using a multimedia-based triple component approach which they performed in a research study with a group of 100 children (50DS and 50IDs). Outcomes from this study are reported in this chapter and future recommendations for classroom and school application are suggested.

Maria Gordon
Voyageur Memorial Elementary School, Canada