

# Welcome to Operation House Call

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Creating inclusive and equitable healthcare  
for people with autism and IDD





**WHAT:** Teach medical professionals the essential skills and mindsets to enhance the quality of health care for people with IDD and/or autism

**HOW:** Teach through storytelling, from lived experience of families and self-advocates

**WHY:** Experiential learning increases empathy and decreases bias to improve health access and equity





# OHC addresses critical issue of health equity

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The National Institutes of Health recently designated **people with disabilities as a population with health disparities.**

- 32% of adults with disabilities reported unfair treatment in health care settings, compared to 10% of adults without disabilities.

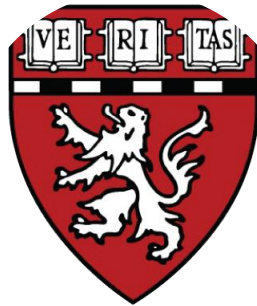
[In a recent survey](#) of 714 physicians across various specialties:

- Only 40% reported being very confident treating patients with physical or intellectual disabilities.
- Just 56% strongly agreed that they'd welcome patients with disabilities into their practice.

[Another study](#) found that 77% of physicians reported only poor or fair ability to care for autistic individuals.

# Our Model

- Classroom session with parent instructors and self-advocates (including panels of individuals, families, and experts)
- Home visits with network of 250+ families
- Self-reflections essays on privacy protected forums + instructor feedback
- Additional readings and resources



Tan Chingfen  
Graduate School  
of Nursing



# Learning Objectives

## Raise awareness

Raise awareness of attitudinal barriers to health equity and access for individuals with autism and IDD

## Reshape mindsets

Build confidence and re-shape mindsets around treating individuals with disabilities, through exposure to lived experiences of OHC families

## Communicate effectively

Enhance ability to communicate effectively and build rapport with individuals with I/DD and autism and their parents or care partners

## Develop cultural humility

Create awareness of implicit biases and intersectionality that might affect the evaluation or treatment of a person with IDD, including concept of 'diagnostic overshadowing'

## Build resource awareness

Increase understanding of potential accommodations, resources and community organizations available to support individuals and families

## Demonstrate sensitivity

Raise awareness of and increase sensitivity to family and sibling dynamics, recognizing the broader context of care and impact of a disability on the entire family

# In-class curriculum topics covered:

- Health disparities for patients w/ IDD, including access to care
- History and importance of inclusive language
- Recognizing implicit bias and impact on care
- Importance of cultural humility
- Effective communication and partnership with patients and caregivers
- Avoiding diagnostic overshadowing
- Impact on caregivers and family members
- Intersectionality – amplified disparities for multiple marginalized communities
- Intersection between IDD/autism and mental health
- Q&A with self-advocate and parent instructors





# OHC Over Time

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- 1991 – initial partnership b/w BUSM and The Arc of MA
- Expanded to Tufts and Simmons in 2011
- Now at 7 schools: all 4 medical schools in MA, plus nursing and other allied health professional schools, including Yale School of Nursing (CT)
- >1300 students reached this academic year, and continuing to grow!
- OHC codified into MA law in July 2023 ... partnering with DPH to certify OHC schools



# Our Impact



## Students

- Increased awareness of bias that affects health equity
- Increased skills, confidence, compassion & interest in providing care for patients with IDD and autism
- Which will translate to more inclusive and higher quality care!



## Families and self-advocates

- Individuals and caregivers empowered as teachers and self-advocates
- Ability to contribute to improving health care system
- Access to the broader OHC community of support, including newsletters and meet-ups



# The Home Visit

- Network of > 250 host families
- Can host a few or many times a year
- Visits (in person and/or virtual) allow students to get to know a family outside a clinical setting



# Family Feedback



***“It empowers my sons who are non-speakers to share experiences; It ensures that the population of profoundly affected are seen...”***

***“It makes our whole family feel like we have a voice.”***

***“...there’s always a moment when you can see something click—the experience goes from theoretical to intimately practical. ... there’s a sense that they’re absorbing what they’re hearing in a way that may influence future interactions.”***

***“OHC has helped my autistic son's self-esteem and feeling of self-worth.”***

# Student Reflections



***“My virtual visit ... has been an invaluable learning experience, offering profound insights into the lives of individuals with Down syndrome and their families. It has challenged me to strive for a healthcare practice that is not only medically competent but also compassionate, inclusive, and respectful of the diverse needs of all patients.”***

***“[my home visit] has been a profoundly enlightening experience that has deepened my understanding of the unique needs and challenges faced by individuals with ASD. By incorporating the insights gained from this experience into my practice, I am confident that I will be better equipped to provide compassionate, person-centered care for patients with diverse needs. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn from (this) family.”***



# From the student perspective

Romila Santra, Harvard Medical School class of 2027

Recent OHC class participant (and [champion](#))

Personal experience as sibling of autistic twin brother



# Our Co-Teachers

- Self-advocates with IDD and/or autism
- Share about themselves in whatever way they wish
- Answer questions from students
- Mentored and supported by our Ambassador Jonathan Gardner



# Co-Teachers & OHC Ambassador

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Evan Messina



Reginald Williams

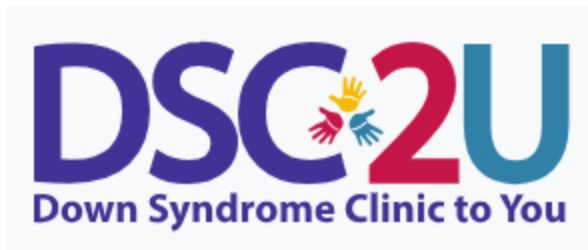


Jonathan Gardner



# Continuing the Learning

[operationhousecall.com](https://operationhousecall.com)



[dsc2u.org](https://dsc2u.org)



[adult-autism.health.harvard.edu](https://adult-autism.health.harvard.edu)



[Inclusivecarerodmap.org](https://Inclusivecarerodmap.org)

10/24/2024



# Any Questions?

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