**Physical Disability**

According to **Uganda National Action of Physical Disability (UNAPD):**

**‘Physical Disability is the absence, non-function, or mal-function of a bone, a muscle, nerve, or any part of the body, resulting into the person having restricted movement, agility or has a countenance or gait that is regarded ordinarily not normal or needs the support of assistive devices to move’.**

Whereas, according to **The Ministry of Health:**

**“Physical Disability refers to all those disabilities that affect movement and posture of a person, and is often referred to as Movement Disability.”**

* **Causes of Physical Disabilities:**

There are many different causes of physical disabilities. Some people may be born with physical disability, while some may become physically disabled later on in their life. Some of them are as under:

1. **Illnesses:**

There are many illnesses that can cause damage to body systems that control movement and make people physically disabled. Some of these illnesses are caused by bacteria and viruses. Some illnesses may be inherited and there are some illnesses of which scientists still don’t know the cause. Following are some of the illnesses which act as chief cause of physically disability:

* **Tumor:**

Sometimes cells in person’s body can begin reproducing abnormally. They grow into a mass which is called tumor. Tumors can show up anywhere in the body, and some of them show up in the brain. Such type of situations can cause physical disabilities. The intensity depends on the location and size of the tumor in the brain. People with brain tumors can suffer from severe headaches and seizures. Brain tumors can also affect vision and speech, as well as memory and thinking. Tumors can be removed both by chemotherapy and surgery.

* **Polio:**

Polio is the most prominent cause of physical disability. It is caused by virus and as it affects the muscles it can make a person paralyzed. In the first part of 20th century, polio was very common in United States and affected many children. The polio disease spreads by ingesting something that has virus on it. So, good sanitation and hand washing is very important. The vaccination for polio was developed by Jonas Salk in 1955. Since then polio was eradicated from the Western World. Although there is a vaccination but unfortunately not all kids from around the world can be benefited by it. World Health Organization is striving hard to eradicate polio from the world.

1. **Trauma:**

According to;’**Dictionary.com’** trauma means:

**“A body wound or shock produced by sudden physical injury, as from violence or accident.”**

This means that trauma is an injury to your body. Trauma is one of the main causes of physical disabilities. Many injuries to our skeletal, muscular or nervous happen when we are in accidents or hurt ourselves. For example, car accidents are on the big causes of trauma related physical disabilities because often people sustain injuries to neck, head or limbs. Sometime our bodies recover from these injuries or injuries are treated by surgery. But in some cases the treatment or cure is not possible; in such type of cases the injuries become permanent and result in physical disabilities. When an injured person becomes physically disabled, he or she needs to learn how to live with their disability. Often, this means changing lifestyle. For example, homes for people who are disabled need space for a wheelchair to access different households.

1. **Congenital:**

According to Dr. Wong:

 “Congenital is something that is present when a person is born.”

Following are the two most common congenital physical disorders:

* **Spina Bifida:**

Spina bifida is Latin for ‘split spine’. It is a birth defect. It occurs when the bones of the spine do not from properly around part of the baby’s spinal cord. It can make walking or daily activities hard to do without help. The disease can be mild or severe. The exact cause of this birth defect is not known. Experts think that genes and the environment are part of the cause. For example, women who have had one child with spina bifida are more likely to have another child with the disease. Women who are obese or who have diabetes are also more likely to have a child with spina bifida. Studies have found that this birth defect can be prevented if women take folic acid before and after the time they are pregnant. However, it is one of the most prominent causes of physical disabilities.

* **Cerebral Palsy:**

Cerebral Palsy (CP) is an umbrella term that refers to a group of disorders affecting a person’s ability to move. It is a permanent life-long condition, but generally does not worsen over time. It is due to damage to the developing brain either during pregnancy or shortly after birth. Cerebral palsy affects people in different ways and can affect body movement, muscle control, muscle coordination, muscle tone, reflex, posture and balance. People who have cerebral palsy may also have different physical visual, learning, hearing, speech, epilepsy and intellectual impairments. Scientific consensus still holds that CP is that the vast majorities of cases are congenital, coming at or about the time of birth, and/or are diagnosed at a very young age rather than during adolescence or adulthood. It can be defined as a central motor dysfunction affecting muscle tone, posture and movement resulting from a permanent, non-progressive defect or lesion of the immature brain. There is no cure for CP, but treatment, therapy, special equipment, and, in some cases, surgery can help a person who is living with the condition.

1. **Genetic:**

Genetic disorder happens when there is a problem with a person’s DNA. DNA is in almost every human cell. They carry genes. Genes make us who we are. Because of genes we inherit from our parent’s different things such as hairs color or eye color. Unfortunately, we also inherit many disorders. DNA is the genes and it is different for every person. DNA is like a fingerprint. When we are born, we get two sets of genes – one from our mother and one form our father. Sometimes one or both sets of those genes carry disorders. In addition, genes can mutate. This means that it will change without any reason. Sometimes they can also change because of things in the environment. When a gene mutates, it can cause various physical disorders.

1. **Arthritis:**

Arthritis is defined as pain in joints, usually reducing a range of motion and causing weakness. It is a form of joint disorder that involves inflammation of one or more joints.

There are over 100 different forms of arthritis. The most common form is osteoarthritis (degenerative joint disease). Arthritis can make it very difficult for an individual to remain physically active. Individuals with arthritis are also at increased risk of depression.

1. **Loss of Limbs or Digits (Amputation or Congenital):**

This may be due to trauma (e.g. explosions, mangling in a machine, severance, burns) or surgery (due to cancer, peripheral arterial disease, diabetes). Usually prosthetics are worn, although these do not result in full return of function.

1. **Parkinson’s Disease:**

Parkinson’s disease is a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system. Early in the course of the disease, the most obvious symptoms are movement-related; i.e. shaking, rigidity, slowness of movement and difficulty with walking. Other symptoms include sensory, sleep and emotional problems. Parkinson’s disease is more common in older people, and the usual age of onset is 50 to 70.

1. **Multiple Sclerosis (MS):**

Multiple sclerosis is defined as a progressive disease of the central nervous system characterized by the destruction of the insulating material covering nerve fibers. The problems these individuals experience include poor muscle control, weakness and fatigue, difficulty in walking, taking, seeing, sensing or grasping objects and intolerance of heat. Onset is between the ages of 10 and 40.

1. **ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease):**

ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) is a fatal degenerative disease of the central nervous system characterized by slowly progressive paralysis of the voluntary muscles. The major symptom is progressive muscle weakness involving the limbs, trunk, breathing muscles, throat and tongue, leading to partial paralysis and severe speech difficulties. This is not a rare disease. Onset is between the ages of 30 and 60, and men three times as often as women. Duration form onset to death is about 1 to 10 years (average 4 years).

1. **Muscular Dystrophy (MD):**

Muscular dystrophy is a group of hereditary disease causing progressive muscular weakness, loss of muscular control, contractions and difficult in walking, breathing, reaching and use of hands in involving strength. People who have muscular dystrophy may have trouble breathing or swallowing. Some varieties of the disease can also affect the heart and trouble breathing or swallowing. Some varieties of the disease can also affect the heart and other organs.