

Going for Gold: Athletes with Intellectual Disabilities – their journey of inclusion

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In this presentation I want to tell the story of how athletes with intellectual disabilities became included in the Paralympics.

This is not just a story of rights, opportunities and values, but also one of how applied research can answer real life questions. The questions generated along this pathway to elite sports inclusion were genuine questions of both scientific and practical benefit. The answers have implications wider than just the sporting context.

I will tell you about the questions raised, how they were answered, and most importantly the consequence in terms of widening opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. I will also talk about where we go from here. Tokyo will be the third Paralympics since athletes with intellectual disabilities were re-included in London 2012. Research and furthering inclusion continues and the focus has, in some ways, moved on from the Paralympics. I'll describe how, and why I think this is a good thing.

The story of developing grass-roots to elite sporting competition for individuals with intellectual disabilities is one that is entwined with our fundamental ideas about what is 'disability'. Good quality research has been a key to open the door to success and making a real world impact.