

Non stigmatizing language guide

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan 2023-2027

Updated in July 2024

IrsiCaixa

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Introduction

IrsiCaixa, in line with its commitment to eliminating stigmas in communication about any disease (e.g., HIV), aims to promote the use of non-stigmatizing language. Since its inception in 1995, the institution has advocated without any discrimination for equal training, innovation and knowledge transfer, health and well-being promotion, and communication between the scientific community and society. With the conviction that **language is a fundamental tool** in driving all these aspects, IrsiCaixa has developed a guide that includes specific guidelines and resources for choosing non-stigmatizing ways to convey any message. This initiative represents another step in defending equal opportunities among groups and eliminating discrimination.

The guide aims to be a useful tool for society, especially the scientific community, by offering non-stigmatizing linguistic strategies that can be used daily. The goal of this guide is to address any doubts that may arise when drafting a text or preparing an oral presentation, providing linguistic resources that promote inclusion. However, the adoption of these new forms of expression should be done naturally, **without compromising the coherence of the texts**.

In this spirit, we encourage everyone to use this guide as support when expressing themselves in a non-stigmatizing manner in their messages. To facilitate its use, the guide has been developed with a focus on synthesis and conciseness. In this way, we aim to encourage as many people as possible in the community to use this resource.

General recommendations

It is important to keep inclusion and non-discrimination in mind from the beginning of writing or delivering an oral presentation. This way, we can avoid corrections and more easily maintain the coherence, precision, and style of the message.

Recommendations when speaking about HIV and related topics

Below are some language suggestions for communicating about HIV and related topics. These suggestions, proposed by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), aim to eliminate any stigmatizing language from our messages regarding HIV and related subjects.

Key terms to avoid

| Use these alternatives... | ...Instead of these | Here's why |
|---|--|---|
| People/person living with HIV, people/person with HIV | HIV positives, HIV-infected people | "Infection" carries the stigma of being contagious, a threat or unclear. |
| HIV acquisition, transmission | HIV infection | |
| Research participant/volunteer | Subject, patient | "Subject" is dehumanizing and denotes a hierarchical system where a group of people are subject to the will of another. |
| HIV elimination/eradication/clearance | Sterilizing cure | The term "sterilizing" has a negative connotation. |
| Perinatal/vertical transmission | Mother-to-child transmission | The preferred terms do not place blame on pregnant people. |
| Use these alternatives... | ...Instead of these | Here's why |
| Person/population with greater likelihood of..., high incidence population, affected community | At-risk or high-risk person/population | The population does not possess an inherent risk. |
| Key population/engage or prioritize a population | Target population | The preferred terms emphasize community-oriented, participatory approaches to ending an epidemic instead of paternalistic, top-down approaches. |
| People who are underserved by [specific service/resource], underrepresented, population(s) experiencing discrimination/racism/transphobia | Hard-to-reach population/individuals | "Hard to reach" places the blame on the individuals and communities in question. The preferred terms put the onus on the health sector rather than communities. |

Stigmatizing terms and alternatives

| Use these alternatives... | ...Instead of these | Here's why |
|---|---|---|
| Sexual orientation | Sexual preference | "Preference" suggests that non-heterosexuality is a choice, a concept often used to discriminate against LGBTQIA+ communities. |
| Condomless sex | Unprotected/unsafe sex | The preferred terms are more specific, accurate, and remove judgment. |
| Has multiple sexual partners | Promiscuous | Avoid "promiscuity" and its derivatives as it is an unnecessary value judgment. |
| Internal condom | Female condom | "Condom" should be used more generically, but when there is a specific reason, internal or external condom can be used. Some transgender men and nonbinary people may use internal condoms, and people of all genders can use internal condoms for anal sex. People of all genders may cut condoms to create dental dams. |
| External condom | Male condom | "Condom" should be used more generically, but when there is a specific reason, internal or external condom can be used. Some transgender men and nonbinary people may use internal condoms, and people of all genders can use internal condoms for anal sex. People of all genders may cut condoms to create dental dams. |
| Probability, possibility | Risk | Preferred terms help to reduce passivity. |
| People/persons with concomitant hepatitis or concomitant tuberculosis | Tuberculosis or hepatitis co-infected people/participants | "Co-infect" and its derivatives carry the same stigma as "infect." |
| Mpox | Monkeypox | The name of the disease was officially changed due to concerns that the original name could be construed as discriminatory and racist. Monkeypox still refers to the name of the virus, but efforts should be made to just say the virus that causes mpox rather than use monkeypox. Mpox is not capitalized unless it begins a sentence. |

Bibliographic references

HIV Language guide. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).