Outdated Medical Terminology

A guide for medical students, educators and providers
The impact of language

October 2022

An important piece to understanding inequities and adequately addressing them is critically analyzing the language and concepts we use every day communicating with our patients, with each other, through our medical documentation, and through our research.

Language is continuously evolving and this table is by no means a perfect or comprehensive list, however, we hope that it serves as a resource to critically think about the language we use and propagate, and how we might make conscious efforts to move towards inclusivity.

Respectful & identity-affirming language puts our humanity at the center.

Inclusive language allows everyone to feel recognized, valued, invited and motivated to contribute at their highest level.

OHSU School of Medicine
Eponyms
An eponym is a person, a place, or a thing after whom or which someone or something is, or is believed to be, named. We acknowledge the effort to transition away from eponyms, however from our literature review, there are currently no alternatives for Hansen's disease.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTDATED TERM</th>
<th>WHY IS IT HARMFUL?</th>
<th>ALTERNATIVE TERM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo Hump</td>
<td>Derogatory towards overweight individuals.</td>
<td>Supraclavicular and/or dorsocervical fat pad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mongolian Spot</td>
<td>Historically, individuals with these skin findings were stigmatized to be racially inferior; term originated with the incorrect belief that it was most common in Mongolian populations (1,2).</td>
<td>Slate grey nevus, congenital dermal melanosis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dwarfism</td>
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<td>Cretinism</td>
<td>Derogatory slang term for someone perceived as foolish or incompetent; historically used to mean &quot;human being&quot; as a reminder that individuals with this condition were humans and not beasts (3,5).</td>
<td>Congenital iodine deficiency syndrome, congenital hypothyroidism</td>
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<td>Retardation is often used as a synonym for &quot;dumb&quot; or &quot;stupid&quot; and equates people with disabilities as such (6).</td>
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<td>Substance abuse (abuser)</td>
<td>Stigmatizing because it reduces an individual’s identity to their struggle with substance (alcohol, tobacco, recreational drug, or other substance) use; denies dignity (8).</td>
<td>Individual with substance use disorder</td>
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<td>Leprosy</td>
<td>Historically used as a metaphor for &quot;all that is impure, immoral, and dreadful&quot; (9).</td>
<td>Hansen's Disease</td>
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<td>Moon face or facies</td>
<td>Slur used for Asians and Pacific Islanders (10).</td>
<td>Swelling or puffing of face</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red man syndrome</td>
<td>Slur used for Indigenous people (11, 12).</td>
<td>Vancomycin-flushing Syndrome</td>
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<td>Wegener's Granulomatosis</td>
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<td>Reiter's arthritis</td>
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<td>Asperger's Syndrome</td>
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REFERENCES


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Alternative: Supraclavicular and/or dorsocervical fat pad

Derogatory towards overweight individuals.

OUTDATED: MONGOLIAN SPOT

Alternative: Slate grey nevus, congenital dermal melanosis

Historically, individuals with these skin findings were stigmatized to be racially inferior; term originated with the incorrect belief that it was most common in Mongolian populations (1,2).
OUTDATED: DWARFISM

Alternative: Individual with short stature, little person

Linked to the root meaning 'to deceive,' implying an inherent moral defect in individuals with short stature (3). Also, historically been linked to intellectual disability which is inaccurate.

OUTDATED: CRETINISM

Alternative: Congenital iodine deficiency syndrome, congenital hypothyroidism

Derogatory slang term for someone perceived as foolish or incompetent; historically used to mean "human being" as a reminder that individuals with this condition were humans and not beasts (3,5).

OUTDATED: MENTAL RETARDATION

Alternative: Individual with intellectual disability or developmental delay

Retardation is often used as a synonym for "dumb" or "stupid" and equates people with disabilities as such (6).
OUTDATED: RED MAN SYNDROME

Alternative: Vancomycin-flushing Syndrome

Slur used for Indigenous people (11, 12).
OUTDATED: WEGENER'S GRANULOMATOSIS

Alternative: Granulomatosis with Polyangiitis

Named after a member of the Nazi party (13).

OUTDATED: REITER'S ARTHRITIS

Alternative: Reactive Arthritis

Named after a member of the Nazi party (14).

OUTDATED: ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

Alternative: Autism Spectrum Disorder

Named after a member of the Nazi party (15).

OUTDATED: CUSHING'S DISEASE OR SYNDROME

Alternative: Hypercortisolism

Named after an anti-Semitic and racist individual who supported the atrocities of the Nazi party towards Jewish individuals (16).