

What is person-first language?

Takes the form
'person with [disease/condition]'
(e.g. person with diabetes)

NOT

'[adjective for condition] person'
(e.g. diabetic person)

Person-first language separates a person's identity from their disease or condition



Complex individual



Condition/disease

This prevents an individual being defined by their condition/disease and reduces associated (subconscious) dehumanization and stigma

Why should we use person-first language?

There are many reasons...



Stop individuals feeling stigmatized or diminished



Help fight conscious and unconscious biases



Consider the entire person when discussing treatment



Remind individuals that they are more than an illness

Who is often referred to with a defining label?

Patients with chronic conditions

Examples

Defining label	Person-first term
Diabetic / diabetic patient	Person with diabetes
Obese person	Person with obesity
Addict / user	Person with substance use disorder
Hemophiliac	Person with hemophilia
Schizophrenic / schizophrenic patient	Person with schizophrenia
Cancer patient	Person with cancer

When might defining labels be appropriate?

Not all conditions are viewed equally.



Some conditions may be embraced and become part of an identity (for example, the deaf community)



Consider the views of the individuals affected when deciding between person-first language and a defining label

How can medical communications help?

Medical communications influence the medical dialogue

As medical communication professionals, we should...

- Produce materials containing person-first language, where appropriate
- Educate those around us as to the importance of person-first language