

ASSESSING THE USE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN HEALTHCARE SURVEYS

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Methods:

Search and mesh terms such as inclusive language, preferred term, survey, questionnaire, equity, person first language were entered into PubMed and google scholar to generate a list of articles. The articles generated were parsed for their relevance to the use of inclusive language in healthcare settings.

The importance of using Inclusive Language when reporting research findings or writing scientific articles

The following articles describe the importance of using appropriate language when engaging in academic research and writing. Once an article has been published, it becomes accessible to a wide range of audiences including patients who might be reading up on their conditions. It is important that they are well represented and that research articles portray inclusiveness through language use.

Dinour LM. Speaking Out on "Breastfeeding" Terminology: Recommendations for Gender-Inclusive Language in Research and Reporting. Breastfeed Med. 2019

This article presents evidence that lactation-related research is conducted and published using gendered language. The use of non-inclusive breastfeeding terminology in this context makes it difficult to collect high quality surveillance data. The article proposes terms that can be used to represent and describe human breast feeding behaviors. Consistently following the guidelines proposed in this article will allow researchers to obtain higher quality research data. (1)

Luck, Christiane. Rewriting Language: How Literary Texts Can Promote Inclusive Language Use. UCL Press, 2020

This book describes the issues with the use of biased language. The book proposes that literary texts negatively impact the readers. The author creates a framework with which texts can discuss issues pertaining to sex and gender in a neutral and non discriminatory manner. The author assesses the effectiveness of their intervention by performing a focus group study on readers to see if they were positively impacted by the use of inclusive language(3)

Likis FE. Inclusive Language Promotes Equity: The Power of Words. J Midwifery Womens Health. 2021 Jan

This article delves into the importance of inclusive language, and the negative impact that biased or dehumanizing language can have on patient health outcomes. The Editor-In-Chief of the Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health Journal expands on the steps the journal has taken in ensuring that all correspondence and manuscripts published follow inclusive language stylistic guidelines.(12)

The overarching impact of language use in non healthcare settings and extrapolations that can be made towards healthcare fields

It is easy to imagine that the use of inclusive language would foster a sense of community and belonging even in non-healthcare settings. These articles provide evidence that using inclusive language increases creativity and performance in business organizations. They also show that students in an education setting benefit from being in an inclusive environment.

Jakob Luring, A. K. (n.d.). Inclusive language use in multicultural business organizations: The effect on creativity and performance - Jakob Luring, Anders Klitmøller, 2017. SAGE Journals.

This article discusses inclusive language use in multicultural organizations. They propose that organizations that communicate appropriately will perform better. They surveyed company managers for their use of management language or inclusive language. They found that the use of management language was positively correlated with performance but not creativity. However, the use of inclusive language was correlated with an increase in both performance and creativity.(2)

Jakob Luring, A. K. (n.d.). Inclusive language use in multicultural business organizations: The effect on creativity and performance - Jakob Luring, Anders Klitmøller, 2017. SAGE Journals.

This article discusses the challenges that foreign language instructors face in the classroom when teaching languages that are inherently gender structured. When attempting to teach gendered language, for instance, German, the instructor must consider how it affects non gender conforming students. Otherwise, the instructor risks creating exclusionary classroom environments. In addition, the instructor inadvertently fails to teach students new socio-cultural developments in said language. The article proposes strategies that can be utilized in language classrooms to create more inclusive language classrooms. (4)

Taheri, P. (n.d.). Using inclusive language in the applied-science academic environments. Technium Social Sciences Journal.

Language and its usage is in a constant state of evolution. That said, it is important to ensure that we stay updated on language use to ensure that we do not inadvertently use language in a discriminatory, disempowering or biased manner. Apart of our use of language in everyday life, we must also be cognizant of our communication in academic environments, to ensure that individuals and groups are not marginalized and prevented from achieving their career goals.(9)

Patient Perspective: How do individuals perceive themselves in healthcare settings

Does this use of inclusive language even matter to patients, do they notice the way that they are being addressed and how does this affect their perspective of the healthcare system. This article discusses and assess feedback from patients navigating Australian healthcare systems.

Carrotte ER, Vella AM, Bowring AL, Douglass C, Hellard ME, Lim MS. "I am yet to encounter any survey that actually reflects my life": a qualitative study of inclusivity in sexual health research. BMC Med Res Methodol. 2016 Jul 27

This online survey study focuses on the feedback received from a qualitative survey about inclusivity in sexual health research. The purpose of this survey was to garner real time opinion from young, gender and sexual individuals in Melbourne, Australia. This feedback indicated that their survey contained heteronormative language. To address these concerns, they made changes to their surveys based on consultation with young gender and sexually diverse (GSD) individuals. They also provide recommendations to ensure that other researchers are collecting data in a manner that is respectful and inclusive of GSD patients.(13)

Evidence for the Importance of Inclusive Language use in Health Care Settings and Practical Steps for the incorporation of said language.

The following articles provide evidence that language does have a significant impact on patient satisfaction and health outcomes. They also show that patients are more likely to access healthcare if they feel like they are in a welcoming and safe environment. These articles also suggest various methods and policies that should be implemented by healthcare organizations and personnel in order to foster a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for patients.

Almeida, C. V. de. (n.d.). Health Literacy uses inclusive language. A Pátria. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://apatria.org/comunicacion/health-literacy-uses-inclusive-language/>.

A case study that describes how health literacy involves the use of inclusive language, it posits that health literacy in healthcare professionals can be measured by their use of inclusive language in both formal and informal communication.(5)

Holt NR, Hope DA, Mocarski R, Woodruff N. First Impressions Online: The Inclusion of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Identities and Services in Mental Healthcare Providers' Online Materials in the USA. Int J Transgend. 2019

This article describes the systemic barriers that Transgender and gender nonconforming(TGNC) patients When attempting to access mental healthcare services, and gender-affirmative care. It is not uncommon for these patients to have to fill intake forms that fail to consider the multiformity of TGNC individuals. This, and many other modes of systemic oppression may result in unfavorable patient outcomes. This paper conducted a Content analysis of the websites and intake forms of mental healthcare providers who work with TGNC clients for their use of gender-affirmative language.(6)

Ehrenfeld J, Gridley S. Education Creates Welcoming Environment for Transgender Patients. ED Manag. 2016 Aug

Transgender patients often face anxiety when interacting with healthcare provider. In order to mitigate the discomfort faced by transgender patient when accessing healthcare services, it is essential that providers create a gender affirming atmosphere for their patients. This can be achieved through provider education, policy review, as well as the modification of electronic and paper intake forms to ensure that they use inclusive language. To further ensure the comfortability of transgender patients, providers should ensure that they always ask for the preferred name and pronouns of their patients. Healthcare administrators may also consider navigator programs where transgender patients are paired with trained advocates.(7)

Holt NR, King RE, Mocarski R, Woodruff N, Hope DA. Specialists in Name or Practice? The Inclusion of Transgender and Gender Diverse Identities in Online Materials of Gender Specialists. J Gay Lesbian Soc Serv.

Despite the fact that recommendations have been made for healthcare providers to use correct pronouns, name and gender-affirming language when treating transgender and gender diverse(TGD) individuals, it is difficult to determine whether or not gender specialists are adherent to this recommendation. This article coded websites and intake forms of gender specialists and healthcare providers for their use of chosen name, correct pronouns and other affirming languages, They also check to see if these websites and intake forms made provisions of transgender resources. The results of their analysis reveal that only half of intake forms included gender affirming language. In addition, providers in states with legal mandates for TGD protection are more likely to use gender affirming language. (8)

Institute of Medicine (US) Subcommittee on Standardized Collection of Race/Ethnicity Data for Healthcare Quality Improvement. Race, Ethnicity, and Language Data: Standardization for Health Care Quality Improvement. Ulmer C, McFadden B, Nerenz DR, editors. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2009.

The importance of Information Technology as a means of collecting health care data in the medical field cannot be overstated. However, despite the widespread of use of Health IT, healthcare institutions fail to obtain high quality data because of the non standardized methods in which race, ethnicity, and language data is collected. This results in an underestimation of the health care disparities

faced by certain groups. In addition, these groups miss out on quality improvement initiatives. In this paper, the authors address the challenges affecting the health IT system, and proffer a standardized method of collecting high quality data.(10)

RWJF, E, C., & D, W. (2019, July 26). A new way to talk about the social determinants of health. RWJF.

This article Focuses on framing language for politicians and lawmakers after finding that people with different political perspectives have different ways of seeing and understanding health. Then describes which framing techniques should be universal to promote better understanding of health and health disparities for the general population.(11)