

Oct 2018

Language and style guide

napwa national association of
people living with HIV/AIDS

Introduction

A lot of things have changed around HIV. We understand it better and fear it less. Antiretroviral therapy is helping it become a manageable disease. But people with HIV continue to experience the sort of stigma and discrimination we endured when it first appeared in the 1980s.

Media stories are still sensationalised. People with HIV are still referred to as 'AIDS patients', 'AIDS victims', 'AIDS carriers' or worse. 'AIDS' is regularly used as an adjective e.g. 'AIDS child' and often to describe those without the condition. These misuses are not only incorrect but insulting. Even well-intentioned and respected organisations produce content on the topic that can best be described as awkward.

It's time we looked at the language we use around HIV. Some of it, such as 'HIV/AIDS', has served its time. 'HIV' alone is adequate as it encompasses all stages of the disease, including AIDS.

NAPWA has produced this guide for those of us writing about HIV in the Australian setting. It incorporates elements from the UNAIDS' *Terminology Guidelines* (March 2007) and the *ASHM style guide* (January 2007).

People may find it difficult to abandon terminology which to date has been both familiar and appropriate. We acknowledge this and join you in the challenge.

Language is a growing thing. So use this *Language and style guide* as just that... a guide.

Some fundamentals

Avoid dramatising

If you are writing about an individual or individuals, imagine you are describing yourself or someone you know personally. 'He was infected with AIDS in the late 1980s' is not only harsh but incorrect. Nothing can be infected with AIDS because AIDS is not an infectious agent. 'He has been living with HIV since the late 1980s' is accurate and sits more comfortably.

In matters relating to transmission, words such as 'infectious' and 'contagious' should be used with caution as they serve to fuel disinformation. Remind yourself how HIV is transmitted* and let this guide your communication.

****For HIV to be transmitted, a sufficient quantity of the virus needs to pass from the bloodstream of someone with HIV into the bloodstream of someone without the virus. The bodily fluids which can contain HIV in these sufficient quantities are blood, semen, vaginal fluids and breast milk.***

Think about your context

Who are you talking to? More familiar terms like 'positive people' are very appropriate in some circles but less so in others. Obviously, an email to a work colleague doesn't require the same attention to detail as a headline in a major daily, but it always pays to be careful.

Is it necessary to personalise your statement? '32 people acquired HIV last month' may be concise. 'Last month there were 32 cases of newly acquired HIV' is clearer and easier to digest particularly should you be one of the 32 mentioned.

Overuse any word or term and it starts to lose meaning. Selective use of 'people living with HIV' will enhance its underlying message. Overuse it and risk sounding patronising. There are many other variations and sometimes a simple 'we' will do.

Words are more powerful than letters

Avoid acronyms unless they refer to an organisation or are familiar to your audience. And always explain them in full at first use (or in each new chapter) with the acronym in brackets after e.g. World Health Organization (WHO). WHO can then be used in the rest of the text.

Abbreviating dynamic principles, like *prevention of mother-to-child transmission* to PMTCT, dilutes rather than empowers the term. Again, it depends on your context and audience, but experiment with other ways of expressing these terms e.g. 'Education campaigns have successfully prevented many cases of mother-to-child transmission' is a more potent message than 'Education campaigns have been successful in PMTCT'.

Appropriate terminology

AVOID

USE

HIV/AIDS

HIV unless specifically referring to AIDS.

Examples include **people living with HIV, HIV prevalence, HIV prevention, HIV testing, HIV disease.**

This also applies when referring collectively to cases of HIV and AIDS e.g. 'There are currently 32 million cases of HIV in the world'.

Use **AIDS diagnosis** when referring to the specific stage of infection i.e. when a recognised opportunistic infection has been diagnosed (Australian guidelines) or use **advanced HIV** or **advanced HIV disease.**

Use 'AIDS' with discretion and limit its use to a global or historical context, as in **AIDS epidemic.** Note: both **AIDS epidemic** and **HIV epidemic** are acceptable.

AIDS is not an adjective. NEVER use 'AIDS victim' (~ sufferer, ~ patient, ~ carrier, ~ woman, ~ baby, etc). The words 'victim', 'carrier' and 'sufferer' are disempowering to the individual/s concerned.

Restrict use of the word 'patient' to the clinical setting and use **patient with HIV-related illness** or **patient with HIV disease.**

There is no 'AIDS test' or 'AIDS virus'.

PLWHA

People with HIV or **People living with HIV (PLHIV)**

To avoid repetition in a document, some variations are appropriate e.g. 'For **those living with HIV**, the legislation was a positive step forward' or 'However, **someone with HIV** may find treatments more difficult to access'.

The only appropriate acronym is **PLHIV** and it should be used sparingly and always spelled out on first use.

HIV positive (~ *man*, ~ *woman*, ~ *child*, etc) is appropriate when discussing subpopulations or individuals e.g. 'The author is an HIV positive gay man'. Note: a hyphen between 'HIV' and 'positive' is more grammatically correct but not necessary.

Use the shortened versions **HIV+** or **positive** (~ people, ~ heterosexuals, etc) when communicating with an informed audience.

Examples of other appropriate terminology

AVOID

USE

addict	drug user
addiction	dependence
ageing with HIV	older with HIV to describe the subpopulation of people over the age of 50 who are living with HIV unless referring to HIV's impact on the ageing process.
ART	highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) or combination antiretroviral therapy (CART) as they more accurately describe current HIV treatment regimens
compliance	adherence is a less dictatorial alternative
developing	resource limited countries, ~ settings, ~ populations, etc
drug abuse	drug use
East Timor	Timor Leste is now current usage
gay men	Men who have sex with men (MSM) unless the individual/s referred to self-identify as gay but Gay and MSM is acceptable.
hepC (~A, ~B)	hepatitis C or hepatitis C virus (HCV)
indigenous	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Use Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander if the individual/s referred to self-identify as same. Avoid use of the acronym ATSI unless it falls within the title of an organisation
intravenous	injecting unless specifically referring to veins
illicit	recreational drug use
IVDU	injecting drug use (IDU) or people who inject drugs
fight against AIDS	alternatives include response, initiative, action, efforts or program against AIDS
high/er risk groups	key populations at higher risk better reflects the dynamics of the epidemic and consolidates a response
needles	injecting equipment is less ambiguous
prostitute	sex worker is the term preferred by those working in the industry
religious organisation	faith-based organisation is less judgmental and more inclusive
salvage therapy	multiple resistance therapy is a more accurate description
STD	STI (sexually transmitted infection) is now currently usage

General style points

Abbreviations

Dr and **St** require no full point as the last letter of the abbreviation is the last letter of the word however **Prof.** takes a full point as does **Co.**

E.g. and **i.e.** (note: full points) are NOT interchangeable. **E.g.** means **for example**, **i.e.** means **that is**

N.B. means **note well** but preferable to use the word **Note** followed by a colon **Note:**

Acronyms

Acronyms and abbreviations should be avoided unless referring to an organisation. When used they should be explained in full at first use (or in each new chapter) with the acronym in brackets after e.g. World Health Organization (WHO). WHO can then be used in the rest of the text

Do not use full points after acronyms e.g. **NAPWA** not N.A.P.W.A.

Addresses

Use **Road**, **Street**, **Avenue** in full, not their abbreviations

Alphabetisation

When listing countries, people, etc put in alphabetical order e.g. Afghanistan, Brunei, Cambodia, Fiji unless you are using some other priority then identify that priority

Ampersands

Try not to use **&** in running text and only if space is tight. Preferred use is **and**

Apostrophes

Its (no apostrophe) is the possessive of it

It's is the short form of it is

Always use when part of name e.g. **St Vincent's Hospital**

Note use of apostrophe in expressions such as **five years' experience** i.e. experience covering five years

No apostrophe is now common usage for general possessives e.g. **members newsletter**, **visitors book**, **drivers licence**

Don't use apostrophe for plurals i.e. **GPs** not GP's, **STIs** not STI's

Capitalisation

In titles use only capital at beginning of heading unless a proper noun e.g. **Recommended HAART regimes, Management strategies for diabetes**

Always use capitals for abbreviations e.g. **HAART** and **HIV** and title case for proper nouns e.g. **Western Blot**

Dates

Always **day month year** e.g. **4 June 2003** (note lack of punctuation). Do not use 4th June '03 **1980s** NOT 1980's

19–23 June 2004, use en dash not hyphen to divide dates. In running text, however, use words not symbols e.g. from **21 to 30 June**, between **16 and 18 May**....

Drug names

Lower case for generic drugs, e.g. **abacavir**, **famciclovir**

Upper case for brand name e.g. **Zovirax**

Correct spellings of common drug names: **abacavir**, **amprenavir**, **atazanavir**, **didanosine**, **efavirenz**, **emtricitabine**, **enfuvirtide**, **entecavir**, **ganciclovir**, **indinavir**, **interferon**, **lamivudine**, **lopinavir**, **nevirapine**, **pegylated interferon**, **ribavirin**, **ritonavir**, **stavudine**, **tenofovir disoproxil fumarate**, **zidovudine**

Drug company names

Abbott

Bristol-Myers Squibb (note where hyphen goes)
Boehringer Ingelheim (no hyphen)
Gilead
GlaxoSmithKline (note one word, yet initial capitals)
Janssen-Cilag
Merck Sharp & Dohme (note use of ampersand)
Pfizer
Roche
Schering-Plough
Tibotec

Emphasis

To emphasise a word or phrase in running text use **bold** or *italics*
In a flyer or form the word NOT can be capitalised for emphasis

En dash

Use it to show spans of times, figures and distance e.g. **3–5** July 2006, pages **31–46**
however use 'from' and 'to' in running text
Use it to show an association between words that retain their separate identities e.g.
prevention–treatment nexus, Australia–Indonesia cooperation

Font

The preferred NAPWA font is **Arial 11 point**

Footnotes

Use a superscript number. In the **Vancouver system** (see below) a superscript Arabic numeral is allocated to each source when it is referred to for the first time. This numeral then becomes the unique identifier of that source and if the source is referred to again in the text that same number is used (even although it may not be in numerical order, so you may get superscripts that look like 3,14,5 NOTE NO SPACE BETWEEN COMMAS). These superscript numbers are placed BEFORE all punctuation except for full stops

Good writing style

Avoid jargon, hyperbole, brochure-speak and journalese. Avoid generalities such as 'it is claimed that...' Also avoid over use of 'there is...' and 'there are...' Try to use active tense. Keep sentences short. Avoid dangling participles

Hyphenation

Use for compound adjectives e.g. **good-quality care, self-styled expert, blood-borne viruses, well-respected epidemiologist, AIDS-related disease, long-term view**
EXCEPTION: **health care worker, HIV-positive man**
BUT NOT after an adverb e.g. **highly regarded virologist, frequently asked questions**
Some compound nouns are also hyphenated – **life-threatening, co-morbidity, ex-partner, non-specific**

Italics

Italicise the scientific names of plants, animals and bacteria, e.g. ***Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia***
Italicise Latin, French and other non-English terms that are not in general usage, e.g. ***I gat hope***, but not for those more commonly used e.g. **ad nauseam**
Italicise the titles of journals, newspapers, books and reports within the text e.g. ***Sydney Morning Herald, Positive Living***

Money

Use **A\$** if any chance of ambiguity. NOT \$A or AUD\$. Otherwise **\$4** (no space between symbol and figure)

Numbers

Spell out one to ten in full unless followed or preceded by % or \$ or any other unit of measure

Use figures for 11 and over ... so, **three** patients, but **23** nurses

Always spell out a number if it opens a sentence e.g. Twenty nurses attended the course

Plurals

Don't use apostrophes for plurals e.g. **GPs** NOT GP's, **STIs**, NOT STI's. (See also **Apostrophes**)

Quotation marks

Use single 'xxx' NOT double "xxx". If a quote within a quote, use double for the internal quote.

Referencing system

The main features of the **Vancouver system** are:

Quotation marks are NOT used for the titles of journals or articles

Book titles and journal articles are NOT italicised. NO ITALICS are used at all in references

Journal titles are usually abbreviated (Google *Index medicus* or *CASSI* for correct abbreviations of titles)

All authors are listed when there are 6 or fewer; when more than 6, the expression et al. is used

Authors are cited thus: Smith CK, Brown D, Jones E, (NOTE: lack of punctuation)

The following examples illustrate the general principle. Note the use of the punctuation:

Batey RG, Bensoussan A, Fan YY, Bolippo S, Hossain MA. Chinese herbal medicine as an alternative therapy for HIC: A preliminary report of a double blind placebo controlled trial. *J Gastroenterol Hepatol* 1998;(13Mar):244–247

Department of Health and Ageing. *Infection Control Guidelines for the prevention of transmission of infectious disease in the health care setting*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2004; 1:10

For more details on the Vancouver system, see *The Style Manual*, pages 215 -218

Spelling

Use Australian English. When in doubt consult Macquarie Dictionary - available online

www.macquariedictionary.com.au

Use **-ise** NOT **-ize** – e.g. **recognise**, **realise**, **organise**, **minimise**, **analyse**, **organisation**
EXCEPTION if an organisation has the Z spelling in its name e.g. **World Health**

Organization

acknowledgment NOT acknowledgement

benefited NOT benefitted

blood-borne virus

bloodstream (one word)

breastfeeding (one word)

discreet = prudent, circumspect, tactful

discrete = separate, distinct

earlybird (one word)

email not e-mail

fax not facsimile

focused not focussed

fortuitously = by chance NOT fortunately

hepatitis C (note lower case h)

HCV (all full caps)

Internet (note capital I)

no one (two words)

online (one word)

per cent (two words)

principal = chief or foremost. Both noun and adjective. As noun means first in importance

principle = (moral) standard, rule or truth, a fundamental, primary or general truth. Noun
rarely used adjectively
program not programme
regimes and **regimens** are both acceptable to describe combinations of drugs
s100 (lower case s)
HIV s100 prescribers (note order of words)
T-cell
under way (two words)

Times

7.00am, 3.00pm NOT 24-hour clock and note NO space between number and am or pm

Common acronyms and abbreviations NB: Only national organisations are included

3TC = lamivudine
Ab = antibody
ABA, ABC = abacavir sulphate
ADC = AIDS dementia complex
AFAO = Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations
Ag = antigen
AIDS = acquired immune deficiency syndrome
AIVL = Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League
AchSHM = Australasian Chapter of Sexual Health Medicine
APV = amprenavir
ARCSHS = Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society
ARV = antiretroviral
ASHM = Australasian Society for HIV Medicine
ATPA = AIDS Treatment Project Australia
AZT = zidovudine
BBV = blood-borne virus
CALD = culturally and linguistically diverse
CD4 = helper T cell which carries the CD4 surface antigen
CD8 = killer or cytotoxic T cell which carries the CD8 surface antigen
CMV = cytomegalovirus
CNC = clinical nurse consultant
CNS = central nervous system
CXCR = chemokine receptor
d4T = stavudine
DB = double blind
ddl = didanosine
ddC = zalcitabine
DLV = delavirdine mesylate
DNA = deoxyribonucleic acid
DoHA = Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing
EBV = Epstein-Barr virus
EFV = efavirenz
ELISA = enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay
ESPRIT = Evaluation of Subcutaneous Proleukin in Randomised International Trial
FBC = full blood count
GESA = Gastroenterological Society of Australia
GI = gastrointestinal
GLBT = gay lesbian bisexual transgender
GP = general practitioner
Gp120 = glycoprotein on surface of HIV which binds to CD4 receptor
HAART = highly active antiretroviral therapy
HASTI = HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmissible Infections (subcommittee of MACASHH)
HAV = hepatitis A virus

HBV = hepatitis B virus
HCV = hepatitis C virus
HFA = Haemophilia Foundation Australia
HIV = human immunodeficiency virus
HPV = human papilloma virus
HSV = herpes simplex virus
IDU = injecting drug user
IDV = indinavir
IFN = interferon
IL = interleukin
IRD = immune restoration disease
KS = Kaposi's sarcoma
LA = lactic acidosis
LMV = lamivudine
LPV/r, LOP/r = lopinavir and ritonavir
MAC = mycobacterium avium complex
MACASHH = Ministerial Advisory Committee on AIDS, Sexual Health and Hepatitis
MDMA = methylenedioxy methamphetamine, 'ecstasy'
MSAC = Medical Services Advisory Committee
MSM = men who have sex with men
MTC = mother-to-child transmission
NACCHO = National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
NAPWA = National Association of People Living With HIV/AIDS
NCHECR = National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research
NCHSR = National Centre in HIV Social Research
NDARC = National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
NFV = nelfinavir mesylate
NNRTI = non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor
NPEP = non-occupational post exposure prophylaxis
NR = non-randomised
NRTI = nucleoside/nucleotide analogue reverse transcriptase inhibitor
NVP = nevirapine
OATSI = Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
OB = optimised background regimen
OI = opportunistic infection
P24 = a core HIV protein
PATSIN = Positive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network
PBAC = Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee
PBPA = Pharmaceutical Benefits Pricing Authority
PBS = Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme
PCP = *Pneumocystis jiroveci* pneumonia, previously known as *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia
PCR = polymerase chain reaction
PEP = post exposure prophylaxis
PI = protease inhibitor
PNG = Papua New Guinea
R = randomised
RNA = ribonucleic acid
RTV = ritonavir
s100 = section 100 of PBS
SAS = Special Access Scheme
SQV = saquinavir
STI = sexually transmitted infection
T20 = enfurvitide
T-cell = white blood cell or lymphocyte
TGA = Therapeutic Goods Administration
TON = Treatment Officers Network
UNAIDS = United Nations program on HIV/AIDS
VL = viral load