



Building a Culture of Respect at the ASTRO Annual Meeting: Language is Action

It is increasingly recognized that "words matter" and can shape and reflect our behavior. Adopting a language of respect extends not only to our patients but also to our colleagues.

With an expanding audience due to increasing of virtual technology and social media, and in order to foster a respectful, [inclusive and bias-free culture](#), ASTRO pledges to raise awareness, provide guidance and standardize appropriate language use at the ASTRO Annual Meeting. As such, the following directives, which will be continually evaluated, updated and modified, have been developed for participants of the ASTRO Annual Meeting during all ASTRO sessions and presentations:

1. When describing research findings or presenting a patient case, avoid language that:

- i. Implies patients are responsible for their condition or outcome
Instead of: "20% of patients failed treatment"
Appropriate language: "20% of patients had tumors that did not respond to treatment"
Instead of: "20% of patients progressed"
Appropriate language: "The tumors progressed in 20% of patients"
- ii. Dehumanizes patients
Instead of: "A 42-year-old paraplegic"
Appropriate language: "A 42-year-old patient with paraplegia"
- iii. Stigmatizes patients
Instead of: "Substance abuser"
Appropriate language: "Patient with a history of substance use disorder"

2. When introducing or addressing speakers:

- i. Speakers who have a doctoral degree (e.g., MD, PhD, ScD, DMD, PharmD) should be introduced and addressed as "Dr. Full Name" or "Dr. Last Name."
- ii. All other speakers should be introduced as "Mr./Ms./Mx. Full Name" or "Mr./Ms./Mx. Last Name."
- iii. Formal titles should be used throughout the entire session, including Q&A, in a consistent manner, regardless of the level of the speakers' mutual familiarity.
- iv. Whenever possible, we strongly encourage all speakers to confirm ahead of time the correct pronunciation of the speakers' names and their gender pronouns.
 - a. Review for more [information on pronouns](#).
 - b. We recommend [this tool](#) to collect correct name pronunciation.

3. While ASTRO welcomes rigorous scientific presentations that promote innovation and sometimes provocative idea exchanges, we would like to remind ASTRO faculty members to please always be professional, considerate and respectful of others. Please refrain from any demeaning, discriminatory, or disruptive behavior and speech. Be supportive of other's rights to participate as a moderator, presenter and audience member.

ASTRO Leadership greatly appreciates the valuable contributions from all ASTRO Annual Meeting Faculty members, and their commitment to support a culture of respectful, collegial and inclusive interactions.