

SGO Language of Respect

As a home for over 2,700 global members from every part of gynecologic cancer care, the Society of Gynecologic Oncology (SGO) is growing increasingly diverse. Through our strategic goals, we aim to develop policies designed to foster diversity, inclusion, health equity, and justice. Respectful language is a powerful driver of inclusive behaviors and mindsets and creates a sense of belonging among an increasingly diverse membership. Furthermore, use of inclusive and respectful language is an important strategy to mitigate biases and microaggressions that plague medical practice.

Professional organizations, like the American Society of Clinical Oncology, have developed and adopted new norms in behavior around inclusive and respectful language in practice and at meetings. Accordingly, SGO is providing guidance to participants at the Annual Meeting on Women's Cancer and beyond regarding the use of respectful, accurate and inclusive language.

This is an evolving journey but is necessary as we aspire to make our spaces welcoming and inclusive.

Directive: Demonstrate Respect for Individual Identity through Intentional choice of language

- Avoid using categories for race, ethnicity, or sexuality as nouns
- Avoid the term minority; preferred: underrepresented, minoritized, or marginalized
- Avoid gendered pronouns when not necessary

Directive: Demonstrate Respect for Patients and Families

Do not Blame Patients

- Patients do not fail therapies; therapies fail patients
 - Instead of this: The patient failed taxol/carbo
 - Try this: The patient's tumor did not respond to taxol/carbo

Respect the Role of the Patient

- Doctors do not manage patients; doctors manage disease or treatments
- Avoid using a disease or condition on its own to refer to a patient
- Avoid using the adjective form of diseases or conditions alone to refer to a person
 - Instead of this: The diabetic was poorly controlled
 - Try this: The patient's diabetes was poorly controlled
- Avoid using language that implies that the patient is the disease
 - Instead of this: 25 BRCA mutants...
 - Try this: 25 patients with BRCA mutations
 - Instead of this: The patient progressed...
 - Try this: The cancer progressed...

Directive: Demonstrate Respect for Colleagues

- All faculty presenters, and panelists, including patients and advocates, who have a doctoral degree (e.g., MD, PhD, ScD, PharmD) should be introduced and addressed as Dr. Full Name or Dr. Last Name. All other faculty, presenters, and panelists (including patients and advocates) should be introduced and addressed as Mr./Ms./preferred title Full Name or Mr./Ms./preferred title Last Name. *These forms of address should continue during Q&A and panel discussions, regardless of whether the faculty know one another. The key element is consistency of address among all panelists.*
- All faculty and committee members should use a professional form of address when accepting their session invitations. Chairs will be asked to briefly reiterate this policy with all faculty in their session on invitations. Chairs will be asked to briefly reiterate this policy with all faculty in their session immediately prior to the start of the session.

References:

Faculty instructions: Demonstrating respect for colleagues and the language of respect
<https://conferences.asco.org/am/faculty-instructions>

Advancing Health Equity: A Guide to Language, Narrative and Concepts: <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/ama-aamc-equity-guide.pdf>