

# Acknowledging the Importance of Proper Word Choice to Avoid Stigmatizing Patients Who Inject Drugs



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We thank Dr Moore and her colleague for their comments<sup>1</sup> on our article describing the cause of death among patients who undergo cardiac surgery for infective endocarditis associated with injection drug use.<sup>2</sup> We agree that the word recidivism used to characterize recurrent drug use as opposed to untreated opioid use disorder is associated with criminal activity, which further stigmatizes addiction and paints people who use drugs in a negative light. This is far from our intent. In our discussion, we acknowledge that addiction is a chronic neurobiological disorder, and emphasize the need for a multidisciplinary approach involving psychiatry, infectious diseases, social workers, cardiology and cardiac surgery teams in order to improve the quality of care and long-term follow-up, and ultimately reduce mortality. In the same vein, we also acknowledge the importance of initiation of medication-assisted therapy and its positive impact on patients with opioid use disorder.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, it is important that correct, nonstigmatizing language is used as we convey findings with the aim of ultimately improving outcomes. Thus, we echo the need to address negative attitudes of health professionals toward patients with substance use disorder and its impact on care, as pointed out in the letter.

## Central Message

We realize the importance of using the correct nomenclature for patients with a history of intravenous drug use. Our message highlights the importance of this patient population and the need to construct efficient care pathways catering to their needs.

## REFERENCES

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