

Word for Word

How to manage the use of “managing patients” vs. “managing disease”



Manage means “to handle or direct with a degree of skill” or “to exercise executive, administrative, and supervisory direction of”¹ one or more people or things. In healthcare, it is sometimes used to refer to multidisciplinary efforts to address chronic health conditions.

Examples:

The researcher whom the awards committee chose will be contacted next week.

In this review, we summarize recent advances in the management of pediatric Ewing sarcoma.

A 61-year-old man presented for management of pain resulting from a previous traumatic injury.

Effectively managing type 2 diabetes with a healthy diet, exercise, and weight loss can reduce the need for medication and the number of physician visits.

The wording *managing patients* should be avoided when referring to the treatment of individual patients or groups of patients,² as it can be

considered dehumanizing (i.e., it can be thought of as “depriv[ing] someone of human qualities, personality, or dignity”³). The wording *treating patients* is preferable.

Original:

We managed patients with stereotactic radiosurgery and then assessed their radiographic outcomes.

Better:

We treated patients with stereotactic radiosurgery and then assessed their radiographic outcomes.

Original:

At the time of evaluation, the patient was being managed with hydrocodone, methadone, gabapentin, and methocarbamol.

Better:

At the time of evaluation, the patient was being treated with hydrocodone, methadone, gabapentin, and methocarbamol.

Or:

At the time of evaluation, the chest spasms and arm pain were being managed with hydrocodone, methadone, gabapentin, and methocarbamol.

Note that *managing patients* is acceptable when used to refer to general treatment guidelines.

Examples:

The World Health Organization recently released updated guidelines for the management of non-hospitalized patients with COVID-19.

The optimal clinical management of adults with Crohn’s disease is debated in the medical literature.

References

1. *AMA Manual of Style*, 11th ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2020. Accessed September 30, 2022.

2. "Manage." Merriam Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/manage>
3. "Dehumanize." Merriam Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dehumanize>

— Ann Sutton

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