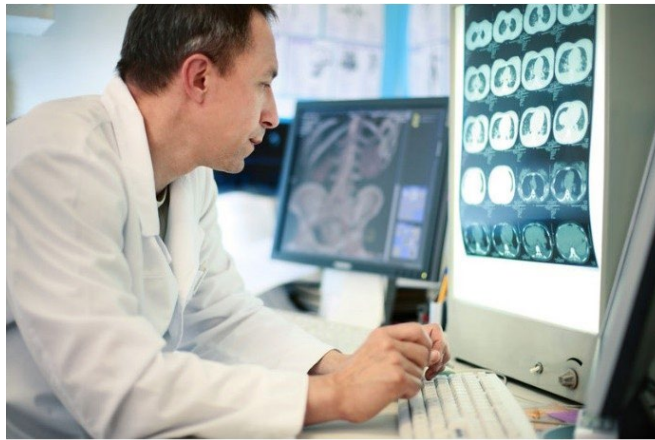# Word for Word

When to use *manage* in medicine

In medical writing, the word *manage* is often used incorrectly.

According to the *AMA Manual of Style*, it's best to avoid the use of *manage* when referring to patients, since its use in this context is dehumanizing. It's usually preferable to say that patients are *treated* or *cared for*.

Not preferred: He published a paper on the *management* of patients with COVID-19.

Preferred: He published a paper on the *treatment* of patients with COVID-19.

The *AMA Manual of Style* gives several examples, however, of when using the word *management* to refer to a patient is acceptable:

- When referring to a general treatment protocol (e.g., "the clinical management of the seriously ill patient").
- When referring to a patient whose care does not involve specific interventions but may involve watchful waiting (as with prostate cancer).
- When referring to monitoring or periodic evaluations of a patient (e.g., "Patient management will involve follow-up CT scans every 6 months.").

The use of *manage* when referring to cases is also acceptable. This is because the word *case* refers to a specific instance of a disease, not to a specific person.

Preferred: The new physician manages all cases of flu in the clinic.

Symptoms and diseases can be either *managed* or *treated*, depending on the meaning of the sentence.

> **Acceptable:** The patient's pain is being managed (i.e., kept in control) by NSAIDs.

> **Acceptable:** The patient's breast cancer was treated (i.e., alleviated or reduced) successfully.

Reference

AMA Manual of Style. https://www.amamanualofstyle.com/view/10.1093/jama/9780190246556.001.0001/med-9780190246556-chapter-11-div1-26?rskey=UHGm7F&result=5. Accessed October 1, 2020.

--Tammy Locke

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