New interim guidance on using inclusive language in understanding, preventing and addressing stigma and discrimination related to monkeypox

- Developed with inputs from relevant IMST focal points, regional RCCE colleagues and members of HHS STAG
- This guidance outlines:
  - Impact of stigma
  - Recommended language & actions to counter stigma/discrimination
  - Recommended policies related to monkeypox outbreak
- Target audience: governments; CSOs; NGOs; HCWs; community leaders; media
- Available [here](#) on WHO website

Includes:
- Definitions and descriptions
- Strategies for preventing and addressing stigma
- Considerations for health systems, media outlets and other agencies
- How to recognize and address unconscious bias
- Do’s and don’ts on the use of non-stigmatizing language throughout the outbreak response

7 September 2022
From the inclusive language guide:

"Stigma and discrimination – or fear of it – may prolong a disease outbreak by stopping people with health conditions from accessing health services or seeking care. Stigmatizing attitudes and discriminatory treatment undermine trust and increase the likelihood that people will avoid seeking care."

Facts:

• Stigma and discrimination may arise unintentionally
• Certain words and language may fuel stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination
• Unconscious biases and attitudes may have devastating impacts on others
Considerations for different operational actors, partners and stakeholders

Health systems and health workers

Health facilities are often the first point of care for people with symptoms that could be monkeypox. It is important to ensure that health workers understand and use appropriate terminology and language to ensure that people feel comfortable and respected while accessing care. This includes making healthcare facilities welcoming and nonjudgmental places, where people can trust that their privacy and confidentiality will be respected.

People seeking care at health facilities for any reason should be treated with kindness, confidentiality and respect by health workers and other support in health facilities staff alike.

Contact tracing

Stigma and discrimination can have a negative impact on people’s willingness to report symptoms and share information about their contacts. People may not want to be associated with the idea of possible sexual transmission, or they may not wish to disclose their sexual orientation or sexual histories. People who conduct contact tracing should ensure that confidentiality is respected and privacy measures are in place. For example, ensure that interviewers with people seeking care take place in a setting where others cannot overhear what’s being said.

Likewise, people who conduct contact tracing should avoid asking patients to elaborate on the specific nature of their contacts’ possible exposures. Stigma or fear of stigma may make people reluctant to disclose contacts, which can further hinder efforts to slow the spread of disease. Contact tracers should encourage people to privately notify their contacts and sexual partners and encourage them to reach out to public health authorities directly for testing and/or care.

The media

Journalists and others working in the media can play an important role to reduce stigma and discrimination by using appropriate language and images in their work and fact checking their content and reporting before it is disseminated to the public. Organizations working with the media can hold events and information sessions to discuss modes of communicating around this outbreak to reduce the risk of stigmatizing language being used.

The RCCE inclusive language guide provides additional guidance for different operational actors, partners and stakeholders, including health systems, media and contact tracers.
An ongoing outbreak of monkeypox was confirmed on 6 May 2022, beginning with a British resident who, after travelling to Nigeria (where the disease is endemic), presented symptoms consistent with monkeypox on 29 April 2022. The resident returned to the United Kingdom on 4 May, creating the country’s index case of the outbreak. After 5 weeks, 4,780 confirmed and 1 death have been reported and affect 150 countries where the disease is mainly not endemic (Global Health, 28 June 2022).
Collective Service – Monkeypox dashboard
https://www.rcce-collective.net/data/analysis-reports/2022-monkeypox-outbreak/

Public interest

Stigmatization risk