

Hospital without Stigma

The words we use matter.

Together we can reduce stigma through language.

As a member of the Brigham community, we believe the words we use in regards to ALL patients are of paramount importance. The language we use when referring to people, whether in the presence of patients and family members or privately among colleagues, speaks volumes. When we use the right language, we decrease the stigma that prevents individuals from receiving quality medical care. We pledge to recognize the power of words and raise awareness around language used. This is especially important for patients suffering from substance use disorders.

We pledge to treat all people with a substance use disorder with respect and integrity. We pledge to recognize a substance use disorder as a chronic medical condition, not as a weakness or moral failing. We pledge to be an advocate for treatment and recovery from this disease.

Instead of using this stigmatizing language ...	Say this ...
✗ Drug abuse or drug habit	✓ Substance use disorder
✗ Addict or junkie or user	✓ Person with a substance use disorder
✗ Alcoholic or drunk	✓ Person with an alcohol use disorder
✗ Dirty urine	✓ Abnormal, positive or unexpected urine test result
✗ Clean urine	✓ Normal or negative urine test result
✗ Clean (referring to a person)	✓ Abstinent, in remission, in recovery
✗ Replacement therapy or medication-assisted treatment	✓ Medication for opioid/alcohol use disorder treatment or medication for addiction
✗ Shooting up	✓ Injecting
✗ Shooter or IV drug user	✓ Person who injects drugs
✗ Problem	✓ Risky, unhealthy or heavy use
✗ Abuse	✓ Use, misuse