

Journalology

CITATION: Singh AR. Proposal about Scientific Names Giving. Mens Sana Monogr 2012; 10: 181-3.

Proposal about Scientific Names Giving**

Ajai R. Singh*

In continuation with the paper on scientific names giving (Singh, 2011^[1]), wherein a plea was made to replace geographical by scientific naming in biomedicine, while continuing with honorific naming, the following proposal is made for consideration by those who have the interests of science at heart. This includes us all, of course, but specifically addresses this plea to the WHO, ICMJE, COPE and WAME, which are world bodies which hold, and forward, the interests of science, health and bioethics. Also addressed is the need to take consent of all authors to the final draft of a paper before publication.

- 1. Objectivity in names giving:** Names given to new discoveries in medicine e.g., bacteria, enzymes, genes, diseases, syndromes, etc., must be based on scientific characteristics alone. Earlier, following a convention of eponymous naming, some names have been based on cities, countries and races/groups of people. This practice needs to be abandoned. Journal editors must ensure “scientific” names giving replaces “geographical” and “racial” names giving. Journals must include this in their standard guidelines in paper submissions.
- 2. Exceptions:** There are four exceptions to [1] above:
 - i. ‘Code’ naming as interim arrangement:** When scientific naming is not possible because scientific characteristics are not sufficiently established in (1) above, ‘Code’ naming may be used as an interim arrangement, to be changed when such characteristics are discovered. ‘Code’ naming is an 11-digit name whose first three digits name the general speciality, next three digits the specific subspecialty, next three digits the geographical location where first discovered and last two digits the year of discovery.

* M.D. Editor, Mens Sana Monographs; ** This proposal is in the backdrop of an article at MSM [see <http://www.msmonographs.org/article.asp?issn=0973-1229;year=2011;volume=9;issue=1;page=294;epage=319;aualst=Singh>]. It was preceded and succeeded by discussions on the topic in the WAME List serve.

Address correspondence to: Dr. Ajai Singh, 14, Shiva Kripa, Trimurty Road, Nahur, Mulund, Mumbai, India-400 080. Email mensanamonographs@yahoo.co.uk

Received 31 May 2011. Revised 17, 25 June, 5 July 2011. Accepted 15 July 2011.

For example, if a new enzyme has to be named in the speciality 'Medicine' [take 'Med'], in the sub-speciality 'Bacteriology' [take 'Bac'], first discovered in California [take 'Cal'] in the year 2011 [take '11'], it should be named 'MedBacCal¹¹', in short MBC¹¹.

- ii. **Honorific naming or names in honor of Pioneers/Institutions:** Names to new scientific discoveries may be given in honor on a pioneering scientist/institution by mutual consent of all paper authors, and with the written consent of the concerned scientist/institution. If the scientist is deceased, an apex body in the respective discipline must accept such a name. Names already in circulation need not be changed.
 - iii. **Names of publications or other products based on institutions:** Names based on institutions where a product [e.g., a publication] originates may be given by the original author/s or office-bearers of that institution e.g., The Publication Manual of the APA, AMA Manual of Style, The Times Style and Usage Guide, Guardian Style, The Economist Style Guide, The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage etc., etc.
 - iv. **Geographical naming of Treaties, Conventions, Agreements, Protocols, Codes, Groups Meetings, Systems, Encyclopaedias, Schools of thought:** Treaties, Conventions, Agreements, Protocols, Groups and Codes may continue to be named after the cities/countries where they were (first) held e.g., Locarno Treaties, Treaties of Rome, Treaty of Lisbon, Vienna Convention, Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture, Kyoto Protocol, Doha Declaration, Uruguay Round, Berne Convention, EU Directives, Vancouver Group [earlier name of ICMJE], Nuremberg Code, Vancouver system, Harvard Referencing, Chicago Manual of Style etc, The Oxford Guide to Style [Hart's Rules], The Oxford Manual of Style, The Cambridge Dictionary, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Encyclopaedia Britannica, British Philosophy, Indian psychiatry, Greco-Roman Civilisation, etc. All such names in currency, although geographical, need not be changed, since they are do not amount to names calling.
3. **Accountability of corresponding author to final draft of paper:** The corresponding author must ensure that the written consent of all authors of a paper to its final draft must be obtained before a paper is published. Editors must include this in their journal's guidelines for paper submissions.
 4. **Geographical/Racial names already in circulation:** Earlier, when scientific naming was not possible because scientific characteristics were not sufficiently established, or following the convention of eponymous naming, 'geographical' naming was used. This must be considered only an interim arrangement. All such racial or geographical names maybe changed to scientific names, or names in honor of their pioneering scientist/institution, by the mutual consent of peers and by their respective professional bodies, or the ICSNM [See 5 below.]

5. **'The International Commission on Scientific Nomenclature in Medicine' or ICSNM:** An international apex body called 'The International Commission on Scientific Nomenclature in Medicine' [on the lines of existing bodies in botany and zoology] called 'The International Code of Botanical Nomenclature' ICBN and it's 'Vienna Code 2006' <http://ibot.sav.sk/icbn/main.htm>; and 'The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature' ICZN <http://iczn.org/content/about-iczn>] may be set up for this purpose. This must comprise of 15 members, 1 each drawn from the disciplines of (1) General Medicine, (2) General Surgery, (3) Pathology/Bacteriology, (4) Pediatrics, (5) Immunology, (6) Psychiatry, (7) Pharmacology, (8) Genetics, (9) ICMJE, (10) WAME, (11) WHO, (12) COPE, (13) a recognised scholar from History of Medicine, (14) a recognised scholar from Medical Ethics/ Social Medicine, along with (15) One co-opted member from any specific discipline whose case has to be considered.

Conflict of interest

None declared.



Reference

1. Singh AR. Science, names giving and names calling: Change NDM-1 to PCM. *Mens Sana Monogr* 2011;9:294-319. PMID: 21694981