



## The influence of journalism

- Public policy, research funding, the research agenda, and community responses are all influenced by how diabetes appears in the media.
- The news media have the power to hold societies to account, raise awareness, challenge perceptions, and resist inequalities. Conversely, they also have the power to amplify stigma, to distort issues, and to keep particular social groups invisible.
- As a journalist, there are steps you can take to minimise any negative impact.

## Language

- Specify the type of diabetes (*type 1, 2...*)
- Avoid referring to people with diabetes using the noun *diabetic(s)*. Try to avoid these types of noun labels:
  - [Person's name], a **type 1 diabetic**, collapsed...
  - A diabetic himself**, Mr [Surname]...
  - Diabetics can lose consciousness...**

Such noun uses are criticised because they reduce people to their disease.

- The nouns *patient(s)* and *sufferer(s)* are also disliked. Instead, use alternative expressions such as:

*people/Australians with diabetes*

*living with diabetes*

*having diabetes*

*developing diabetes*

*diagnosed with diabetes*

- Refer to diabetes as a *condition* rather than a *disease/illness*. *Condition* is more neutral and less associated with stigma.

Further advice on language is provided in Diabetes Australia's [position statement](#).

## Absences

- A recent University of Sydney study has shown that references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are extremely rare in national and metropolitan newspaper coverage of diabetes. This absence is significant because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are almost four times more likely to have diabetes or pre-diabetes than other Australians (Source: Diabetes Australia 2018). If we want to close the Indigenous health gap in Australia, we need to change the conversation in the news media, for example by including the voices and perspectives of Indigenous Australians. As a journalist, you play a key role in this process.
- Practical issues are important news topics: this includes issues of equity of access to specialists, regular eye/foot screenings, adequate management, etc. This is difficult outside bigger cities, but is crucial for people with diabetes.
- It is especially important to report on diabetes in areas where many people are affected. South Australia and the Northern Territory have the highest percentage of people registered on the National Diabetes Services Scheme (Source: <http://www.diabetesmap.com.au>).

## Animal studies

Avoid the temptation to exaggerate the implications for humans when a study is based on mice or other animals. Conclusions from both animal and human studies should be realistic and not overstated.

## Stigma and myths

- Avoid blaming individuals and contributing to stigma associated with having diabetes.
- Be aware of the myths and misconceptions about diabetes and avoid perpetuating them in your writing. Common myths and corresponding facts are listed at: <https://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/myths-facts>.