



Comment on “The Personification of Cancer”

Talk about striking a nerve. The editorial by Anne Katz in the May 2014 issue of *Oncology Nursing Forum* moved me to immediately write this letter—my first ever letter to the editor.

I strongly believe in the power of language. I want to strike the term *cancer patient* from the lexicon. For the past 30 years of my 44-year career in oncology, I have used every opportunity available to me to encourage professionals, laypeople, and people diagnosed with cancer to say “people with cancer” rather than “cancer patient”—to put the emphasis on the person rather than the disease.

After presentations, patient education materials, newsletters, press interviews, meetings, and personal encounters, my influence seems to have amounted to zilch. But I think it is important, maybe transformative, to change our wording. When I hear “cancer patient,” it grates on my consciousness. I want it to stop.

And now, I see validation on the page of a prestigious journal. What if every oncology nurse in the country stopped saying “cancer patient” and instead said, “people with cancer” or “my patient with cancer” or “Mary/John who has cancer”? It puts cancer in the backseat and the individual in the driver’s seat. See how excited I’m getting?

Kudos to Anne Katz.

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