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Recap of MeSH NLM Office Hours Special Listening Session on Population Groups

June 30, 2022

On June 30, 2022, NLM welcomed 261 attendees to a listening session to provide an overview of the MeSH process, discuss the role of community input in MeSH development, listen to suggestions, and gather input from attendees.

Dianne Babski, Associate Director of Library Operations, and Dan Cho, PhD, Content Lead and Project Coordinator for MeSH, opened the online listening session with a short history of MeSH, provided an overview of the annual process for updating the MeSH vocabulary, and shared actions that NLM is taking to ensure that updates to MeSH are consistent with Federal standards while remaining inclusive and respectful. Following these introductory remarks, the floor was opened to hear from the community about NLM's proposed changes and solicit ideas to improve transparency and understanding around MeSH. Some points of interest voiced by attendees included:

- increasing understanding of the MeSH review committee and process by which changes are made to MeSH;
- increasing transparency by providing more information about the MeSH review process and how decisions to update or change MeSH terminology are made;
- ensuring that terminology for population groups reflects modern language and usage, and is not considered offensive;
- how population group terms are treated in automated indexing and mitigating bias in algorithmic-based decision-making;
- leveraging the perspective of experts outside of NLM and NIH;
- timing of changes for descriptors and subheadings (annually) and Supplemental Concept Records (daily); and
- immediate and long-term actions NLM is taking, including aligning with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for race and ethnicity terms.

A common thread reiterated by attendees throughout the listening discussion is a desire for NLM to enhance its engagement with stakeholders, particularly the medical library community and Library and Information Science professionals, throughout the MeSH lifecycle.

NLM shared that it will host an additional listening session on population groups and investigate proactive engagement of stakeholders through NLM's Network of the National Library of Medicine for future MeSH updates.

NLM is listening to the concerns voiced by its stakeholders and is committed to working with the health sciences and medical library community.

What's Next?

- Stay tuned for NLM announcements about future listening sessions by subscribing to the NLM Technical Bulletin.
- Participate in future NLM Office Hours.
- Continue to share your feedback via NLM Customer Service. When you write to the help desk, use "MeSH Listening Sessions" in the subject line. Please include your e-mail address so NLM can respond to you or follow up if we have more questions.

Useful Links

- Slides and recording from the June 30 MeSH listening session:
  https://www.nlm.nih.gov/oet/ed/mesh/office-hours-mesh_special.html
- NLM Customer Service: https://support.nlm.nih.gov/support/create-case/
- NLM Technical Bulletin announcement:
  https://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/techbull/mj22/brief/mj22_nlm_office_hours.html
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