

# What's New in the *AMA Manual of Style*

## Speakers

**Stacy Christiansen, MA**, *Managing Editor, JAMA, and Co-Chair, AMA Manual of Style, JAMA Network, Chicago, IL*

**Annette Flanagin, RN, MA**, *Executive Managing Editor, JAMA Network, and AMA Manual of Style Committee, Chicago, IL*

**Cheryl Iverson, MA**, *Co-Chair, AMA Manual of Style, JAMA Network, Chicago, IL*

## By Laurie Anne Walden, DVM, ELS

The *AMA Manual of Style* is updated between editions to reflect changes in policy and style. Stacy Christiansen, Annette Flanagin, and Cheryl Iverson discussed revisions that have already been implemented and upcoming changes for the 11th edition, scheduled for publication in 2019.

## Manuscript Preparation

Iverson discussed reasons for upcoming changes in reference styling (Table 1). For example, omitting periods after DOIs and URLs in reference entries facilitates accurate link copying.

All elements within tables and figures (column headings, axis labels, etc) will be set in sentence-style instead of title-style capitalization. Table titles will continue to use title-style capitalization.

**Table 1.** Reference Updates in the 11th Edition of the *AMA Manual of Style*

- Publishers' locations no longer included
- Online references: URLs moved to ends of reference entries and not followed by a period (style already implemented for DOIs)
- Examples added for social media and digital references: tweets, blog posts, databases, etc

## Style and Terminology

The 11th edition will include numerous style updates (Table 2). Christiansen said that allowing *they* to be used as a gender-neutral singular pronoun helps preserve patient confidentiality and has been implemented by other style guides.

**Table 2.** Selected Style and Terminology Updates

- Use of *they* as a singular pronoun allowed in certain circumstances (sentence rewrite preferred)
- New entries added to list of nonhyphenated terms (eg, *open access journal*)
- New entries added to abbreviation list: ACL (anterior cruciate ligament), LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer), MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome), and more
- All fellowship designations, including non-US fellowship designations like FRCP, no longer included in bylines
- *Health care*: still 2 words
- Space added between the number and the degree symbol in temperatures ("37.5 °C," not "37.5° C" or "37.5°C") per SI notation

The new edition will include grammar guidelines for social media. For clarity, posts about scientific content should use standard capitalization and punctuation and avoid potentially confusing shorthand (such as *U* for *you*).

Further, the new edition will update guidelines for describing socioeconomic status and people with addiction. These recommendations avoid assigning labels (eg, *low income* instead of *the poor*). Other terms, such as *nauseated/nauseous*, will be added to the Usage section. Spelling and spacing variations will be added, with JAMA Network preferences indicated in bold (eg, ***data set/dataset***).

The Genetics section will specify using italicized gene symbols or gene descriptions instead of gene aliases: write "*TP53*" or "tumor protein p53 (Li-Fraumeni syndrome) gene," not the gene alias "p53." Whether gene symbols need expansion depends on context, said Christiansen. The stylebook will follow the Human Genome Variation Society recommendation to avoid the terms *mutation* and *polymorphism*, preferring terms such as *sequence variation* and *allelic variant*.

## Measurement

The Statistics and Mathematical Composition sections will add terms (eg, *multivariable/multivariate*) and new

examples. New to the 11th edition will be the SI convention of inserting a space between the number and the degree symbol in measures of temperature, such as in “temperature of 37.5 °C” (not “37.5°C”).

### Technical Information

Information on typography, tagging, and display will be combined into a single chapter. The new edition will also include discussions of XML and the JAMA Network single-source workflow.

Guidelines such as those of the Committee on Publication Ethics and the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) will be added to the Resources section. In the publishing glossary, terms such as *CD-ROM* and *fax* will be removed; *cloud*, *IP address*, and others will be added.

### Editorial Assessment

#### Corrections

Retraction and replacement is a new option for correcting some published articles. Twenty-one percent of retractions occur because of errors, not misconduct, said Flanagin. Pervasive errors are mistakes (such as coding errors) that occur before the data are analyzed, propagating incorrect numbers throughout the manuscript. Retraction and replacement, which does not carry the stigma of full retraction, is available for articles with pervasive errors that change the findings. In these cases, journals can publish an author’s letter of explanation; replace the article, retaining the original DOI but not adding a retraction watermark; and publish a PDF with corrections highlighted.

#### Authorship

The new edition will update authorship roles (Table 3). JAMA Network journals have begun to accept some requests for shared first authorship. Two corresponding authors can be listed in some cases.

**Table 3.** Updated Authorship Roles

<b>Contributors</b>	Everyone who worked on a project (authors, collaborators, writers, assistants, etc)
<b>Authors</b>	Contributors who meet all 4 authorship criteria of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors Byline authors: listed in byline Nonbyline authors: listed at end of article
<b>Collaborators</b>	Members of a formal group who contribute significantly to the work but are not authors
<b>Group Authors</b>	Individuals who work together on boards, committees, working groups, etc, and use a group name for authorship

#### Data Sharing and Access

The ICMJE now requires data sharing statements for articles reporting clinical trial results, as outlined in the *AMA Manual of Style*. The new edition will also include discussions of public access models (no author fee, journal holds copyright), open access models (article processing charge, author holds copyright), and predatory journals.

#### Finding Style Updates

Updates are posted on the *AMA Manual of Style* [website](#). Readers can ask style questions on Twitter (@AMAManual) and read about scientific communication topics at the AMA Style Insider [blog](#).

For more details from the conference presentation, see the session slides on the AMWA website (<https://www.amwa.org/page/2018sessions>).

*Laurie Anne Walden, DVM, ELS, is a freelance medical editor and writer and owns Walden Medical Writing, LLC, in Charlotte, NC.*

**Author contact:** [editor@waldenmedicalwriting.com](mailto:editor@waldenmedicalwriting.com)