

## What's in a name?

It's "dejavu all over again" was the thought that crossed my mind after reading the titles of some of the abstracts presented at the Annual Clinical Genetics meetings and published in the January/February 1999 issue of *Genetics in Medicine*.

Many years ago I wrote about the inappropriateness of using perjorative terms to describe a child's facial features such as "FLK" or "funny looking kid." I again put pen to paper 6 years ago voicing my concern regarding the term "Michelin baby syndrome." It is now 1999 and although my pen has been retired, my word processor is humming and once more I deem it necessary to voice my opinion on this subject.

Oldies, but **not** goodies, are gracing the almost virginal pages of this new journal. The descriptive term "birdheaded dwarf" (Abstract 42) should never be published in a medical journal. Can you imagine the reaction of a distraught and anxious parent after being told that his or her precious baby is a "birdheaded dwarf"? Other unacceptable terms are "Kabuki make-up syndrome" (Abstract 49) and "prune belly" (Abstract 46). If you don't believe that the term "prune belly" is offensive, inform your spouse that he or she has a "prune belly" and then await the reaction.

Now, on the threshold of the year 2000, a new term has been coined to describe the face of a patient with Albright hereditary osteodystrophy (Abstract 78). The term "soup kid" faces named after the "Campbell soup kid" should be driven out of the medical lexicon on the same Michelin tires that are transporting the "Michelin baby" syndrome to nomenclature oblivion.

I am sure that the innovators of these descriptive terms, and those of us who subsequently use them, do not intentionally mean to cause any added emotional distress to patients and their families. However, we must be much more sensitive when coining and using such inappropriate terminology.

What's in a name you may ask? A great deal if it is pejorative and is used to describe someone's baby, or perish the thought, your own child or grandchild.

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