

*WHO to use MPOX instead of
MONKEYPOX to avoid stigma
and racism*

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Geneva, November 29 (RHC)-- The World Health Organization (WHO) says it will start using “mpox” -- a new preferred term for monkeypox -- in a bid to avoid racism and stigmatisation stemming from the existing name.

The United Nations has previously criticised some news coverage about the virus, warning that poor journalism can “reinforce homophobic and racist stereotypes and exacerbate stigma.” The disease was first discovered in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the spread among humans since then mainly limited to certain West and Central African nations.

A surge in monkeypox infections has been reported since early May mostly among men who have sex with other men, outside the African countries where it has long been endemic. The UN has suggested limiting the number of sexual partners a person has to decrease the risk of transmission. While men who have sex with men have been disproportionately likely to be affected, public officials have stressed that anybody can contract monkeypox.

But in May, cases of the disease, which causes fever, muscular aches and large boil-like skin lesions, began spreading rapidly around the world. The WHO declared the spread of monkeypox a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC), the global health organisation's highest level of alert, on July 23.

"When the outbreak of monkeypox expanded earlier this year, racist and stigmatising language online, in other settings and some communities was observed and reported to WHO," the UN health agency said in a statement issued in Geneva.

The WHO launched a public consultation process to find a new name for the disease earlier this year and received more than 200 proposals. One of the more popular public suggestions was "mpox" or "Mpox", put forward by men's health organisation REZO, among others. Its director said at the time that the removal of monkey imagery helped people take the health emergency seriously.

"Following a series of consultations with global experts, WHO will begin using a new preferred term 'mpox' as a synonym for monkeypox. Both names will be used simultaneously for one year while 'monkeypox' is phased out."

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