

Noninvasive Prenatal Screening is now Prenatal Cell-Free DNA Screening

The ACMG leadership, supported by discussions with the ACMG Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, has adopted a change to the use of the term "noninvasive prenatal screening" and its associated acronym, NIPS.

The term "Nip" and "Jap" are ethnic slurs and were used specifically to denigrate and stigmatize persons of Japanese descent and origin during World War II. Anti-Japanese sentiment continued after the war, and both terms remained as racial slurs, rekindled in the 1980s-90s due to the competition in the automotive and technology fields. We recognize that these terms are still considered slurs and exist as part of a larger pattern of anti-Asian racism that flourished during the pandemic and continues to present day.

It is still important to stress that this is screening and not diagnostic testing, reflected by the term NIPT (noninvasive prenatal testing) used by some. However, continuing to use noninvasive is not ideal as cell-free DNA screening is not the only "noninvasive" prenatal screen available (i.e., quad screen, first trimester screen or even ultrasound). Continuing to use noninvasive implies invasive or diagnostic testing (e.g., chorionic villus sampling or amniocentesis) is not preferred.

The term "prenatal cell-free DNA screening" or prenatal screening by cell free DNA is an accurate description of this screening test. The term "NIPS" cannot be replaced in the entirety of the already-published literature, but going forward we are hopeful of the switch to prenatal cell-free DNA screening and strongly encourage its adoption. This terminology was used successfully throughout our 2023 ACMG Annual Clinical Genetics Meeting in March.

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