

Descriptions of handicapped should stress people, not disabilities

Editor's note: This is the last of a four-part series examining the rise of "politically correct" thinking.

By Dawn Wilson
Staff Writer

If it's not important, don't even mention it.

That's what the Associated Press 1990 Stylebook advises reporters when writing stories involving people with disabilities.

The AP Stylebook also warns against the use of offensive phrases such as "wheelchair-bound." Primarily, the AP Stylebook says if the disability is not relevant to the story, it should not even be mentioned.

Terminology used to apply to people with disabilities is another facet of the growing "politically correct" ideology. One of the main goals of P.C. is to promote multiculturalism and equality through prescribing "correct" attitudes and terminology toward race, sex, sexual orientation, culture and ecology.

Taner Seref, the president of the Carolina Handicappers for Equal Opportu-

nity, said, "Personally, I think the problem with the term handicapped or disabled is that it applies to a diverse group: those with mobility problems, blind people and all sorts of disabilities," he said. "These terms mean different things to different people."

One common phrase considered offensive is "wheelchair-bound" or "confined to a wheelchair." This presents the wheelchair as a confinement and not as a mobility tool. The politically correct phrase is "a person who uses a wheelchair."

"If you refer to an individual as 'confined to a wheelchair,' that can be offensive to some, even if it is true," Seref said.

Don Evans, a news editor at the Chapel Hill Newspaper, said the paper followed AP Style when addressing people with disabilities. First, the disability is not even mentioned unless it has relevant news value to the article, and all derogatory terms are avoided.

Some consider articles or praise concerning how someone has overcome a disability to be patronizing. In order to avoid this, Evans suggests letting the

person with the disability write the article in his own words.

Jon Ham, managing editor of the Durham Herald-Sun said although care should be taken to avoid offensive terms, it was impossible to have one blanket term that covered all applications.

"Our policy is not to offend, but we don't fall for the 'physically challenged' euphemism, and we are not in the business of creating euphemisms," Ham said.

Ham does not agree with the growing ideology of political correctness. "For somebody who marched in the '60s, I guess people wonder why it (P.C.) offends me. The same tyranny we found back then — people telling us how to think — is the same tyranny now, on the flip side of the coin," he said. "It may be considered the great debate of the '90s."

Mary Elizabeth Kias, a freshman history major from Winston-Salem said, "If it's P.C. or not, I don't care. If I think something's important, I'm going to agree with it."

A 1988 article, "Unhandicapping Our Language," by author and historian Paul Longmore and syndicated columnist Dianne Pastro, lists several other terms and phrases that should be avoided when addressing handicapped people.

Objectionable terms include "the disabled," "the deaf" and "the blind." These terms categorize people in terms of their disabilities. The preferred terms are

"people with disabilities," "deaf citizens" and "blind people."

The article also warns against identifying people with disabilities as victims. This term connotes helplessness and pity. Instead, state the facts of the situation, the article says. Write, for example, "Franklin Roosevelt had polio," instead of "FDR was a polio victim."

Care should be taken to avoid identifying someone as "arthritic" or "stricken with." These terms call attention to the disability and away from the person. The person with the disability should not be defined as that disability. For example, "John had epilepsy," instead of "John was an epileptic."

Seref said, "People want to be identified as persons, not by their physical problem."

The term "deaf and dumb" should also be avoided because it associates mental capability with a physical disability. The term should be replaced with "hearing-impaired" and "speech-impaired."

Sherry Dennis, a senior psychology

major and member of the Carolina Handicappers for Equal Opportunity, said, "One of the things that bothers me is when people associate mental capacity with physical capability."

"Just because someone's not able to walk, people assume that they're not smart," she said. "As a result, not much is expected, and you're not given a chance."

Longmore and Pastro said the terms "mentally ill," "insane" and "retard" were outdated and demeaning. These terms may be replaced by "mental disability" or "emotional disability."

"Unhandicapping Our Language" said the debate over the use of handicapped versus disabled had not been settled and no preference was given. However, Dennis said she preferred the term "disabled."

"I think I like the term disabled better, but I don't think there will ever be any nice word. Every one has negative connotations. Disabled sounds less negative," she said.

Heather Mehling, a first-year Evening College student, said she wished all

groups could come together under the term "American" instead of providing labels.

Seref said one of his personal perceptions was that people were not comfortable around those who were disabled, and as a result, many have a tendency to avoid them.

"Stereotypes are always there," Seref said. "Obviously, with different groups of disabled, there are different problems and stereotypes differ. Society has a harder time understanding, which leads to ignorance," he said.

Seref said some may be scared or intimidated by disabled persons. "I don't think there's any reason to be scared," he said.

Although some people may not wish to talk about their disability, Dennis said it did not bother her. "I tend to know when someone wants to ask a question and they don't."

"People are fearful that I'll get upset," she said. "It bothers me when someone wants to ask a question and they don't. The best way to learn about something is to ask questions."

Judge declares mistrial in case of HIV-infected brothers

The Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — A federal judge declared a mistrial Thursday in the case of three hemophiliac brothers whose parents blame two blood-products companies for their sons' infection with the AIDS virus.

A six-member jury deliberated 13

hours over three days and twice told the judge it was deadlocked about whether the pharmaceutical companies were negligent in failing to warn customers of the risk of contracting AIDS.

The suit was filed by Clifford and Louise Ray, parents of Ricky, 14, Robert, 13, and Randy, 11.

The Rays claimed Cutter Laboratories and Armour Pharmaceutical Co. were negligent for not putting warnings on the blood-clotting products used by their sons.

"What I'm hoping for is that there's not another family that has to go through this," Mrs. Ray said.

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Audit

State University, as well as UNC-CH, he said.

Billings said the audit would cost the state about 2,000 hours of work at \$30 an hour, or \$60,000. "This is a small audit compared to others."

The schools will not have to pay any of the costs, he said.

UNC-system schools are not being audited because of the state budget cuts, Billings said. "This is no implication of impropriety. This is all a normal routine in state government."

After the audit, the number of faculty members could be increased or decreased, Billings said.

The state planned to audit system universities last spring, but decided to postpone it because it was "a bad time for universities," he said.

Richardson said he was not worried about the audit. "I just don't know how

it can be done in such a short time."

But he is concerned that conducting an audit this late in the academic year is not an ideal time because faculty members are preparing to leave for the summer, Richardson said.

Billings said the state probably would look at school records in conducting the audit. Targeted areas include 1989-90 policies and procedures and how a university monitors its day-to-day performance, he said.

Campus Calendar

FRIDAY

Now: "What Sells Papers: Front Page Characteristics on Single Copy Sales of USA Today" Gary Gaddy, IRSS, will discuss this topic in O2 Manning until 1 p.m.

The Lesbian Lunch will be today in the Union. Check the desk for the room number.

2 p.m. UNC College Republicans will hold the final Executive Board Meeting in the Frank Porter Graham Lounge in the Union. Plans for summer and next year as well as committee chairmanships will be discussed.

6:30 p.m. Join FOCUS for a free dinner and subsequent discussion of "Christian Abiding in Unity: Forgiveness and Reconciliation" at the Brock's home, 413 Granville Road, Chapel Hill. Call 933-6687 for more information or a ride. FOCUS is the graduate chapter of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

International Student/Scholar Orientation Counselor applications are available at the International Center. Undergraduate and graduate students who are willing to return to Chapel Hill on Wednesday, August 14 and who would like to assist new foreign students in their orientation and adjustment to UNC should apply. The International Center is located in the Union next to Great Hall. Anyone interested in singing in the UNC Opera

Theatre Workshop, next semester, autumn, 1991, should contact director Terry Rhodes immediately. Casting decisions for the fall production (with orchestra) will be made before the end of this semester. Call 962-2270, 962-1039 or 933-8806.

Witness something powerful in the Pit (Friday at 12:30.) The Ebony Readers will present a preview of their Spring Production. Beware! The content may blow your mind into the 21st century!

The Ebony Readers Onyx Theatre will present their Spring Concert Dramatic Production on April 26 and 27 at 7 p.m. in the Cabaret. Admission is free.

Beware... the subject matter is something powerful!! All Big Buddies!! Come by the Campus Y and fill out either a Returning Big Buddy form or a Program Evaluation Form by April 26. This is mandatory!!

Seniors and Graduate Students who have accepted jobs are requested to complete a UCPPS Employment Survey form, available in 211 Hanes. Those still seeking jobs may make an appointment to see a UCPPS counselor (call 962-6507) and may call the Job Hot-Line (962-CCPS) to hear current job openings.

Tar Heel Recycling Program, TARP, announces permanent drop-off sites at Hinton-James, Ehringhaus, and Graham dorms and between FLOB and Lineberger building. The mobile drop-off site for today is between Connor and Alexander dorms for newspaper, glass and aluminum cans.

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Sat. & Sun. Mat. 2:30-4:30

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