

PEOPLE MATTER,TM WORDS MATTER

ARE YOU USING **CARING** AND **CONCERNED LANGUAGE** ABOUT **AGING**?

Language matters in compassionate care, and that is not limited to what you say in front of a patient. What you say behind closed doors to coworkers, friends and family can plant the seed of stigma.

No matter what role you play in your hospital, it is likely that you will encounter older adults who are coming to you to seek care or to support a loved one. Older adults can encounter language and practices that can prevent them from feeling respected, safe and heard when seeking care.

INSTEAD OF SAYING OR THINKING ...

- ▶ Seniors, senior citizens, the elderly, the aged, fossil, geezer, dinosaur, the olds, over the hill, past their prime.
- ▶ This patient is senile or demented.
- ▶ A geriatric patient.
- ▶ You look [great for your age, spry, active]!
- ▶ Terms of endearment like “honey,” “sweetie” or “dear.”
- ▶ This patient is too old to make decisions about their care.

[THESE STATEMENTS PERPETUATE
STIGMA AND CONTRIBUTE TO
STEREOTYPES ABOUT OLDER ADULTS.]

CONSIDER THIS STATEMENT OR APPROACH ...

- Older adults, older people, people 65 and older, the older population.
- This patient has dementia.
- An older patient, a patient who is [number] years old.
- You look [healthy, vibrant, happy, etc.]!
- Use the patient’s name or refer to them the same way as you would a younger patient.
- A person's age does not always correlate with their ability to care for themselves or have medical autonomy.

[THESE STATEMENTS ARE AGE-INCLUSIVE AND
CONVEY RESPECT AND CARE TO OLDER ADULTS.]

Thank you to Carilion Clinic for being a source of information and talking points on this topic.