



Correct and Preferred Usage Quiz by Laura King, MA, ELS

Directions: The following sentences all contain 1 usage error each. Identify the errors and reword the sentences appropriately based on your reading of section 11.1 of the *AMA Manual of Style*.

1. Individuals with latent *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* infection may benefit from chemoprevention, which militates the risk of subsequent active tuberculosis development.

ANSWER:

Individuals with latent *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* infection may benefit from chemoprevention, which mitigates the risk of subsequent active tuberculosis development.

Editor's Note: The words *militate* and *mitigate* are not synonymous. *Militate* means to have weight or effect and is usually used with *against*. *Mitigate* means to moderate, abate, or alleviate (§11.1, Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 398 in print).

2. A lymphomatous leptomeningeal involvement was ruled out by negative cerebral, spinal, and cranial magnetic resonance imaging.

ANSWER:

A lymphomatous leptomeningeal involvement was ruled out by negative findings from cerebral, spinal, and cranial magnetic resonance imaging.

Editor's Note: Examinations and laboratory tests and studies are not in themselves abnormal, normal, negative, or positive. These adjectives apply to observations, results, or findings (§11.1, Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, pp 381-382 in print).

3. Pericarditis has been reported as a rare side effect in patients treated with low doses of methotrexate for various benign conditions but not with high doses in aggressive lymphomas.

ANSWER:

Pericarditis has been reported as a rare adverse effect in patients treated with low doses of methotrexate for various benign conditions but not with high doses in aggressive lymphomas.

Editor's Note: *Side effect* is a secondary consequence of therapy (usually drug based) that is implemented to correct a medical condition. The term is often used incorrectly when *adverse effect*, *adverse event*, or *adverse reaction* is intended. Because a side effect can be either beneficial or harmful, the specific term should be used (§[11.1](#), Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 384 in print).

4. The partial remission persisted for 10 months under maintenance therapy without hematologic, hepatic, or renal toxicity.

ANSWER:

The partial remission persisted for 10 months under maintenance therapy without hematologic, hepatic, or renal toxic effects.

Editor's Note: *Toxic* means pertaining to or caused by a poison or toxin. *Toxicity* is the quality, state, or degree of being poisonous. A patient experiences toxic effects, not toxicity (§[11.1](#), Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 403 in print).

5. The patient died from a pericardial effusion.

ANSWER:

The patient died of a pericardial effusion.

Editor's Note: Persons die *of*, not *from*, specific diseases or disorders (§[11.1](#), Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 391 in print).

6. Shortly after week 2, most of the smaller ulcers were almost completely reepithelialized, and fewer than 50% of the larger ulcers remained.

ANSWER:

Shortly after week 2, most of the smaller ulcers were almost completely reepithelialized, and less than 50% of the larger ulcers remained.

Editor's Note: Use *fewer* for number (individual persons or things) and *less* for volume or mass (indicating degree or value). Percentages and money conventionally use *less* rather than *fewer* (eg, less than 50%, less than \$1000) (§[11.1](#), Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 394 in print).

7. The wounds remained open and inflamed despite 4 months of this treatment regime.

ANSWER:

The wounds remained open and inflamed despite 4 months of this treatment regimen.

Editor's Note: A *regime* is a form of government, a social system, or a period of rule. A *regimen* is a systematic schedule (involving, for example, diet, exercise, or medication) designed to improve or maintain the health of a patient (§[11.1](#), Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 401 in print).

8. Doctors play an important role in counseling patients on smoking cessation and weight loss.

ANSWER:

Physicians play an important role in counseling patients on smoking cessation and weight loss.

Editor's Note: *Doctor* is a more general term than *physician* because it includes persons who hold such degrees as PhD, DDS, EdD, DVM, and PharmD. Thus, the term *physician* should be used when referring specifically to a doctor of medicine or osteopathy, ie, a person with an MD or a DO degree (§[11.1](#), Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 392 in print).

9. The 2 slices obtained during magnetic resonance imaging showed widespread atrophy.

ANSWER:

The 2 sections obtained during magnetic resonance imaging showed widespread atrophy.

Editor's Note: Use *section* to refer to a radiological image; use *slice* to refer to a slice of tissue (eg, for histological examination) (§11.1, Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 402 in print).

10. Both congenital hypothyroidism and acquired hypothyroidism are common in cases with Down syndrome.

ANSWER:

Both congenital hypothyroidism and acquired hypothyroidism are common in patients with Down syndrome.

Editor's Note: In clinical research, a *case* is a particular instance of a disease. A *patient* is a particular person under medical care. Do not refer to *patients* as *cases* unless describing a case-control study (§11.1, Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 388 in print).

11. A patient with pericarditis was diagnosed with major pericardial effusion, which rapidly led to her death despite admission to a cardiologic intensive care unit.

ANSWER:

A patient with pericarditis was diagnosed as having major pericardial effusion, which rapidly led to her death despite admission to a cardiologic intensive care unit.

Editor's Note: Patients are not diagnosed but their conditions may be diagnosed. A standard way to rephrase the phrase “patients diagnosed with” is “patients diagnosed as having” (§11.1, Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 391 in print).

12. Study participants were selected from a birth cohort study of individuals younger than 21 years of age.

ANSWER:

Study participants were selected from a birth cohort study of individuals younger than 21 years.

Editor's Note: It is unnecessary and redundant to add *of age* in this example. When the terms *older* and *younger* are used, age is implied (§11.1, Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 399 in print).

13. The test signal was comprised of filtered white noise with a center frequency of 7 kHz, a bandwidth of 5.5 to 8.5 kHz, and a slope of 48 dB per octave.

ANSWER:

The test signal comprised filtered white noise with a center frequency of 7 kHz, a bandwidth of 5.5 to 8.5 kHz, and a slope of 48 dB per octave. OR The test signal was composed of filtered white noise with a center frequency of 7 kHz, a bandwidth of 5.5 to 8.5 kHz, and a slope of 48 dB per octave.

Editor's Note: *Comprise* means to be composed of or to include. *Compose* means to make up or be a constituent of. The phrase *comprised of* is never correct (§11.1, Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 390 in print).

14. The patient with hypertension was put on hydrochlorothiazide and metoprolol.

ANSWER:

The patient with hypertension was prescribed hydrochlorothiazide and metoprolol.

Editor's Note: The phrase “to put [or to place] a patient on a drug” is jargon and should be avoided. Medications are prescribed or patients are given medications; therapy or therapeutic agents are started, administered, maintained, stopped, or discontinued (§11.1, Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 400 in print).

15. Because of the motor vehicle accident, the patient experienced the following adverse effects: pain in his left leg, dizziness, and nausea.

ANSWER:

Because of the motor vehicle crash, the patient experienced the following adverse effects: pain in his left leg, dizziness, and nausea.

Editor's Note: The term *accident* (and *accidental*) is considered by the public health community to be imprecise. The injury-causing event can be described with such terms as *crash*, *shooting*, *drowning*, *collision*, *poisoning*, or *suffocation* (§**11.1**, Correct and Preferred Usage of Common Words and Phrases, p 382 in print).