

## **Resident Guide**

### **Labelling in Medicine**

CanMEDS Competency: Advocate

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Goal: The purpose of this session is to generate discussion about the implications that labels carry for our patients. This case-based session is based on the patient presented in the following article. Although this is a fictional case, the patient will undoubtedly be all too familiar to many of you.

[https://www.cmaj.ca/content/187/9/682?ijkey=b2338b6fc4269c1d7bd229c5b2dd415e16fe05db&keytype2=tf\\_ipsecsha](https://www.cmaj.ca/content/187/9/682?ijkey=b2338b6fc4269c1d7bd229c5b2dd415e16fe05db&keytype2=tf_ipsecsha)

Determining the correct diagnosis is an integral part of medicine. What are we if we are not diagnosticians first? But has our need to find the etiology overshadowed our ability to care for our patients in some cases?

The idea for this session came out of my experience in developmental pediatrics with Dr. Ben Klein. On my first day in clinic, Dr. Klein told me that he doesn't believe that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is a valid clinical construct, that it is stigmatizing and damaging. It took me a couple days to muster the confidence to ask him what he meant – after all, alcohol is a known teratogen. The following article authored by Dr. Klein himself summarizes his response.

<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/188/14/1035.2>

#### Mandatory Pre-Session Reading (same articles as above):

- Alcohol-exposed? Next. JD McLennan. CMAJ 2015, 187(9) 682-683.  
[https://www.cmaj.ca/content/187/9/682?ijkey=b2338b6fc4269c1d7bd229c5b2dd415e16fe05db&keytype2=tf\\_ipsecsha](https://www.cmaj.ca/content/187/9/682?ijkey=b2338b6fc4269c1d7bd229c5b2dd415e16fe05db&keytype2=tf_ipsecsha)
- Functional impairment, not FASD. BJ Klein. CMAJ 2016, 188(14) 1035-1036.  
<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/188/14/1035.2>

#### Optional Pre-Reading:

- Alcohol-induced behavioural problems in fetal alcohol spectrum disorders versus confounding behavioural problems. MK Malone, G Koren. J Popul Ther Clin Pharmacol 2012, 19(1) e32-e40.  
<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Alcohol-induced-behavioural-problems-in-fetal-Malone-Koren/ae29b8f3f060a1c053a91e7d9e4819c40dd2f5ea>

- Just a label? Some pros and cons of formal diagnoses of children. Joyce Cheng, The national Centre for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA.  
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/diaglabel.pdf>
- Stigmatisation, exaggeration, and contradiction: An analysis of scientific and clinical content in Canadian print media discourse about fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. John Aspler et al., Can J Bioethics 2019, 2(2).  
<https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1058140ar>
- Nobody's Normal: Challenging the Stigma of Mental Illness | Roy Grinker | TEDx  
A bit of the flip side – highlighting the utility of some labels.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYVpTYKevxQ>