RESULTS

The searches yielded 56,048 scholarly articles for diabetes and 45,584 articles for obesity published between 2011 and 2020. Among diabetes articles, 42.8% used person-first language, 40.1% used condition-first language, and 17.2% contained both. Among obesity articles, 0.5% used person-first language, 99.3% used condition-first language, and 0.2% contained both (P<0.001 vs. diabetes articles).

DIABETES-FOCUSED ARTICLES

- On average, the use of person-first language in diabetes-focused articles increased by 3.1% per year (Figure 1A).
- Diabetes articles were more likely to use person-first language if: 1) they were published in a journal that had a policy encouraging the use of person-first language, and 3) if the article was published more recently.

OBESITY-FOCUSED ARTICLES

- 0.1% of obesity-focused articles used person-first language in 2011 compared to 6.6% in 2020 (Figure 1B).
- Obesity articles were more likely to use person-first language if: 1) they were published in a US-based journal, 2) if the journal had a policy encouraging the use of person-first language, and 3) if the article was published more recently.

IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY POSITION STATEMENTS

- Person-first language was used more following the publication of professional society position statements that recommend person-first language (2018-2020) than in the years prior (2011-2017; P=0.001).
- However, among diabetes-focused articles, the rate of change in the proportion of articles that used person-first language was not different in 2018-2020 when compared to 2011-2017 (P=0.970).

SCHOLARLY JOURNALS

- The 25 journals that most frequently publish diabetes-focused articles (29.3% of all articles) were more likely to use person-first language when compared to journals with fewer diabetes articles (49.9% vs. 39.8%, respectively; P<0.001)(Figure 2).
- Journals that frequently publish obesity-focused articles (21.6% of all identified obesity articles) were also more likely to publish articles that use person-first language (0.8% vs. 0.4%; P=0.001).

CONCLUSIONS

- While the use of person-first language in diabetes articles has increased over the past ten years, adoption has recently slowed despite the publication of language guidelines and policies.
- Among obesity-focused articles, person-first language is generally not used, suggesting a widespread lack of recognition of its importance within the scientific community.
- Growing evidence supports the value of employing person-first language in clinical settings, and scientific publications set an example for the way health care professionals communicate about people with diabetes and obesity.