

Response to letter by Campbell and Teed in *CJEM*

I agree that words matter, that names carry weight. I had not actually considered that the term “ambulance attendant” would cause offence, but likely should have. However, quite correctly, Dr. Campbell and Mr. Teed understood that part of good writing involves the avoidance of repetitive words and expressions, hence the contentious descriptor.

While I cannot speak for paramedics, I do feel comfortable speaking for myself as an emergency physician. Although I have tried over the years to use “emergency department” over “emergency room,” I

could never muster anything close to passionate outrage if someone called my place of work an “ER.” Similarly, although I do not refer to myself as an “emergency room physician,” neither do I find the term the least bit controversial or offensive.

I might remind Campbell that we in the field of emergency medicine owe part of our cultural cachet to a certain American network TV series called “ER,” which ran from 1994 to 2009, a show I have previously written about.¹ I can assert with some confidence that this

program influenced a generation of now young emergency physicians to pursue a career in our specialty.

Brian Deady, MD

Royal Columbian Hospital
New Westminster, BC

Keyword: Emergency medicine

REFERENCE

1. Deady B. Reality emergency. *CMAJ* 2005;172(12):1585; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.050545>.