

LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Imagery Case Study

Introduction

As the MRCT Center prepared to launch over 100 additional words for the [Clinical Research Glossary](#) the Health Literacy team started to develop images to visually represent each word featured in the glossary. The MRCT Center created template features to draw upon when creating new images of participants and/or researchers, to support diverse representation across the images. These features include standard colors for clothing and objects in the images; a range in skin tones, hair colors, genders, body types, and ages; and depicted use of assistive technologies (wheelchairs, canes, prosthetic devices). The Representation in Research team then asked about adding LGBTQIA+ inclusive features and collaborated with the LGBTQIA+ Inclusion by Design Working Group to provide guidance to the designers.

The key points and example images listed below are based on a distillation of the lessons learned by the MRCT Center during this process, and on the insights and comments shared by the LGBTQIA+ Inclusion by Design in Clinical Research Working Group. We invite you to draw from these options in developing inclusive participant-facing materials for your studies and sites. All people feel more welcome to participate in a clinical trial when they see themselves visually represented in the information communicated about the study, study site/s, and study staff.

Key Points

- Representation of all families and all genders is welcome, inclusive of representation of people who are non-binary,^a no gender, or who prefer not to disclose their gender.
- The images could incorporate Pride Flag (preferably Progressive Pride Flag) symbols. However, please note that such use can sometimes be viewed as reductive,^{1, 2} and not everyone sees themselves in the Progressive Pride flag.³ The specific audience/s,

^a A nonbinary person identifies outside of a gender binary by seeing themselves as neither a man nor woman. Nonbinary people are part of the trans community. See: <https://www.nih.gov/nih-style-guide/sex-gender-sexuality>

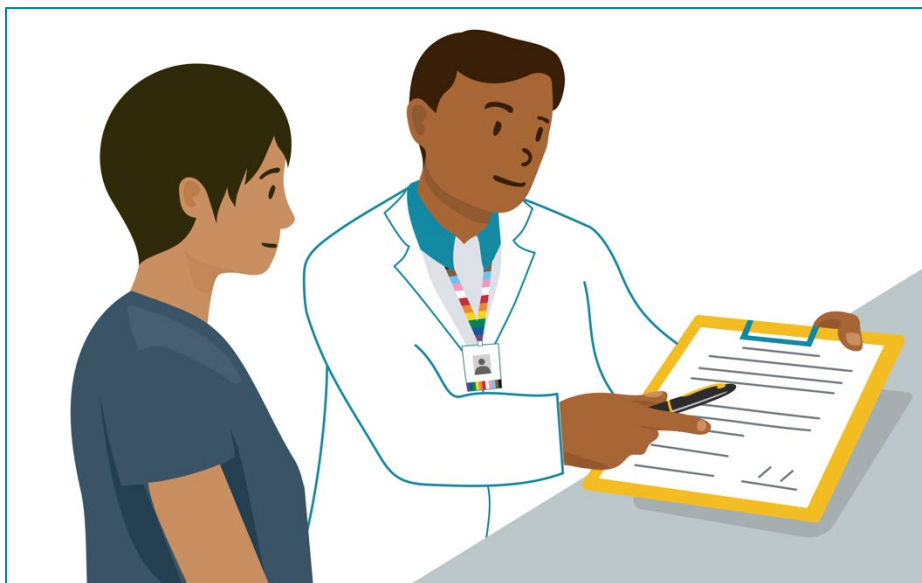
context in which images will be used, and options for capturing everyday moments of LGBTQIA+ people's participation in clinical research should be considered.⁴

- Rainbow symbols may be incorporated in many ways, for example, on lanyards, name tags, pins, watchbands or bracelets, ties, necklaces, pens, mugs, or plant holders.
- If utilized, Pride Flag symbols should be incorporated into images of both the participant/s and the researcher/s. These symbols should be visible but can be subtle, in recognition that identifying as LGBTQIA+ is but one part of a person's identity.
- Incorporation of symbols, hairstyles, and clothing used among LGBTQIA+ communities as cultural shorthand to signal identities and kinship may be considered.^b However, note that these symbols can be interpreted differently by different audiences and are subject to change over time.

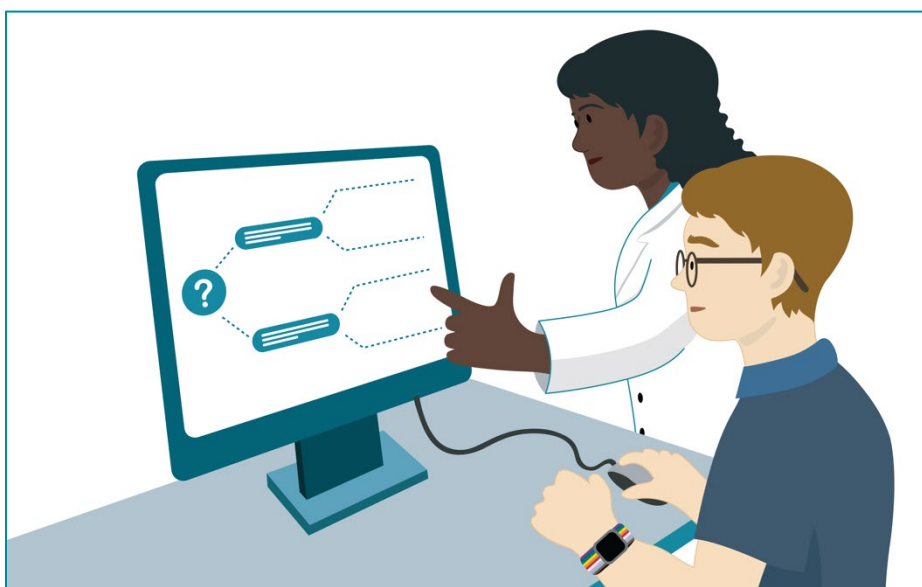
^b Please note that we haven't been able to find a comprehensive list of symbols from a non-commercial source. The Matthew Shephard Foundation LGBTQ+ Terms and Symbols Glossary (<https://www.matthewshepard.org/resources/lgbtq-terms-and-symbols-glossary/>) describes numerous symbols and the UC Davis Resource Center has an extensive glossary of terms that LGBTQIA+ people can use to define themselves and their intersecting identities (<https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary>). Two commercial sources that have more extensive visual listings of symbols (sometimes with explanation) are: We Are Pride Wholesale at <https://www.wearepride.com/blogs/news/top-common-lgbtq-symbols> and Heckin Unicorn at: <https://heckinunicorn.com/collections/enamel-pins/cat>. The MRCT Center does not endorse these commercial entities, which are listed here, only as reference points for discussion, and with the caveat that any use of symbols should always be discussed first with LGBTQIA+ communities.

Example Adapted Glossary Images

Informed Consent



Study Conduct



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1. Google and GLAAD. (2024). *Inclusive Marketing: LGBTQ+ People*. Available from: <https://all-in.withgoogle.com/audiences/lgbtq-people/#reflect-diversity>
 2. GLAAD. (2022). *GLAAD Media Referencing Guide, 11th Edition*. Available from: <https://glaad.org/reference/>
 3. San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus. (2023). *Get to Know the Meaning Behind the Colors of Major Pride Flags*. Available from: <https://www.sfgmc.org/blog/pride-flags>
 4. GLAAD and Getty Images. (2022). *LGBTQ+ Guidebook for Inclusive Visual Storytelling. Helpful Practice to Improve Representation*. Available from: <https://custom.gettyimages.com/lgbtq-guidebook/p/1>