

# UN health agency: Don't name diseases after regions, animals

May 8 2015

---

The World Health Organization is issuing new advice on the best way to name new diseases—guidelines the U.N. health agency itself has previously broken.

In a statement published on Friday, WHO criticized disease names like Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome and [swine flu](#), which can be stigmatizing. WHO said officials shouldn't name diseases after geographic locations, animal species, or peoples' names. It said names should include "generic descriptive terms."

In 2003, WHO announced the name for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, first seen in southern China and Hong Kong. For months, Hong Kong officials battling an outbreak of the illness—led by Dr. Margaret Chan, now WHO's chief—refused to refer to it as such, since Hong Kong is known as a Special Administrative Region, or SAR.

© 2015 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: UN health agency: Don't name diseases after regions, animals (2015, May 8) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-05-health-agency-dont-diseases-regions.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--