

## Publication

**“To Normalize is to Impose a Requirement on an Existence.” Why Health Professionals Should Think Twice Before Using the Term “Normal” With Patients****JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)**

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The term “normal” is culturally ubiquitous and conceptually vague. Interestingly, it appears to be a descriptive-normative-hybrid which, unnoticedly, bridges the gap between the descriptive and the normative. People’s beliefs about normality are descriptive and prescriptive and depend on both an average and an ideal. Besides, the term has generally garnered popularity in medicine. However, if medicine heavily relies on the normal, then it should point out how it relates to the concept of health or to statistics, and what, after all, normal means. Most importantly, the normativity of the normal needs to be addressed. Since the apparently neutral label “normal” can exclude, stigmatize, and marginalize people who are defined in contrast to it as abnormal, health professionals should think twice before using the term with patients. The present critical perspective advocates against using the term “normal,” as long as no understanding of a person’s individual normality has been attained. It advocates for the right to autonomously determine one’s own normality. For health professionals I do not see worthwhile benefits of subscribing to the concept of (non-individual and normatively loaded) “normality” and imposing it on their patients. But I do see many risks.

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