# “HIV Virus” Is Redundant

July 13, 2009 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Certain phrases prove to be difficult to erase once they have been written into our language. “HIV virus” is one of those phrases. “HIV virus” is redundant. The word “virus” is already included in the acronym of the human immunodeficiency virus.

Here’s the entry for “HIV” in the current version of the stylebook supplement on LGBT terminology from the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA):

> HIV: Human immunodeficiency virus. The virus that causes AIDS. “HIV virus” is redundant. “HIV-positive” means being infected with HIV but not necessarily having AIDS. AIDS doctors and researchers are using the term “HIV disease” more because there are other types of acquired immune deficiencies caused by toxins and rare but deadly diseases that are unrelated to what we now call AIDS. See AIDS.

I added the bolding above to highlight that the redundancy issue is well known, at least to those of us who follow such things. Regardless, it just won’t go away.

I don’t really know if Magic Johnson coined the phrase, but he sure was responsible for popularizing it. In his 1991 speech announcing his retirement from playing professional basketball with the Los Angeles Lakers, he said: “Because of the HIV virus that I have attained, I will have to retire from the Lakers today.”

Watch his speech:

The phrase still pops up in news coverage all the time. A recent Google News search found more than 300 results for “HIV virus” being used in a news story. Ugh.

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