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Letter: Intestinal Microbiota Transfer – Updating the Nomenclature to Increase Acceptability

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~~Title~~Letter: Intestinal Microbiota Transfer – Updating the Nomenclature to Increase Acceptability

Running Title: Updating the Nomenclature of FMT

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We would like to commend Lai and colleagues for their comprehensive review and analysis of 168 faecal microbiota transplantation (FMT) studies[1]. The authors extensively reviewed donor features, procedures, and outcomes of these FMT studies. Their findings highlight the discrepancies in screening of stool donors, the efficacies of the procedure for treatment of various diseases, and a call to action to standardize methods of stool donor selection[1]. This review demonstrated that transferring the intestinal microbiota from one person's intestinal tract into another is a highly effective treatment for recurrent and refractory *Clostridioides difficile* infection, with an overall cure rate of 95.6%[1]. However, despite its effectiveness, this procedure still faces negative social perceptions, predominantly related to its name. The term FMT has been widely accepted since it first appeared in the literature in 2011[2]. A number of research groups have altered the terminology since, which can range from the abbreviated "faecal transplant" to "human probiotic infusion"[3] to "intestinal microbiota restitution therapy"[4]. Here we present a table of definitions of the terms that comprise FMT that we propose to change and our suggested alternatives moving forward (Table 1).

Stigma and negative perceptions surrounding FMT can be barriers to recruit and retain stool donors[5]. It may also impact the likelihood of doctors to discuss this procedure with their patients. A survey found that 69% of medical students believed it would be easier to discuss FMT with patients if it had a more socially acceptable name[6]. We believe that the meaning of 'intestinal' versus 'faecal' does not significantly differ in this context and it could be used as a more appealing substitute that reduces stigma associated with the source of the donor material. This change has been suggested previously to overcome the negative connotations and confusion surrounding the use of 'faecal'[4,7,8], however FMT is still most commonly found in the literature[1]. The use of

'intestinal' could lead to higher recruitment of potential stool donors and its more widespread use if it was discussed more freely by healthcare professionals with their patients.

We support the use of the term 'microbiota', in agreement with previously proposed changes to the nomenclature[4,7]. The suitability of the word 'transplantation' in FMT has been discussed previously and concerns were raised that the word implies a restoration of function, which has yet to be defined in gut microbiome research[4]. We suggest a change from the word 'transplantation' to 'transfer', as transplantation implies that engraftment is necessary to be termed successful[9]; however, the need for donor microbiota engraftment has yet to be definitively proven. In conclusion, we propose the phrase intestinal microbiota transfer (IMT) be utilised moving forward instead of faecal microbiota transplantation to more accurately reflect the procedure and increase its acceptability by patients, donors, and healthcare workers. IMT is an effective and lifesaving therapy[1]; its name should no longer be a barrier to its acceptability and accessibility.

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Author Contributions: James R. McIlroy conceived the presented idea. Laura J. Craven prepared the first draft of the manuscript. All other authors contributed to manuscript review and revisions. Julian R. Marchesi is the guarantor of the article.

Statement of Interests:

Laura J. Craven is a paid consultant for EnteroBiotix. James R. McIlroy is employed by and holds shares in EnteroBiotix Limited. James R. McIlroy is a named inventor on several microbiome related patent applications. Benjamin H. Mullish reports personal fees from Finch Therapeutics Group.

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Tables

Table 1. Proposed Changes to Nomenclature	
Existing	**Proposed**
Faecal: relating to, or constituting faeces†	**Intestinal:** affecting, occurring, or living in the intestine†
Transplantation: the transfer (engraftment) of human cells, tissues or organs from a donor to a recipient with the aim of restoring function(s) in the body[9]	**Transfer:** to convey from one person, place, or situation to another†

† Defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary