In 2004, the term for dementia was officially changed in Japan as part of a public campaign to raise public awareness about dementia and replace the previous stigmatizing phrase "chihō." Chihō is a compound word, with chi means foolish and stupid, and hō means foolish and absent-minded. When paired, both characters have connotations that can be interpreted as insulting.

The aim of this presentation is to examine the name-changing process and to explore its implications for Japan and the field of dementia studies in general. First, the rationale and process through which the new name for dementia, "ninrishō," was selected is explained. The influence of the name-change on related associations including the Alzheimer’s Association Japan (AAJ), is then examined. Finally, the presentation delineates how an educational initiative was developed in response to the decision to advance a new terminology, ninrishō, and evaluates the initial impact of the name-changing project.

Recently, the DSM-5 Task Force has been considering removing the term “dementia” and adding “Major Neurocognitive Disorders.” The presentation ends by providing some insight about how the permutations that the term dementia has already undergone in another culture (Japan), can provide insights into the implications of changing the name of a neurodegenerative disease in the West.