

Medical Terminology

A Language of its Own

- A. Like a foreign language to most people
- B. Made of terms that describe the human body in detail
- C. Used to convey the greatest quantity of information, with the least confusion and the most precision, to any medical professional in the world
- D. A single medical term can describe a disease, condition or procedure that might otherwise take several words
 1. Example: *appendectomy* = surgical removal of the appendix
 2. Example: *coxitis* = inflammation of the hip joint

- E. The foundation of medical terms are Greek and Latin
 - 1. 75% of all medical terms are based on Latin or Greek terms
- F. The Greeks were the founders of modern medicine
- G. Latin is the language of choice for medicine and science

H. The first medical dictionary appeared in the 1830s

- 1. *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary* was first published in 1890
- 2. The rapid increase in medical and scientific knowledge necessitates a new medical vocabulary to describe it
- 3. It is impossible to learn **all medical terms**, but it **is possible to** figure out their meanings by analyzing the word parts
- 4. By learning the meaning of the basic word parts, you will frequently be able to interpret the meaning of a word

I. Etymology

- 1. The science of the origin and development of words
- 2. Indicates the origin and historical development of a term
- 3. Helps you to find its origin and historical development
- 4. Helps you to decipher words with Latin and Greek origins

J. Eponyms – words named after people

- 1. Parkinson's disease – named after the English physician Dr.
- James Parkinson

K. Acronyms – modern language terms that stand for longer phrases

- OMG
- LOL
- NFL
- Nascar -national association for stock car auto racing

L. Abbreviations

- 1. Shortened forms of words
- 2. Used in many health fields
- 3. Each medical facility has an approved abbreviation list
- 4. It is the responsibility of healthcare workers to learn the meanings of the abbreviations used in the facility in which they work
- 5. Refer to the abbreviation/acronym list

II. Basic Word Parts: Roots

- A. The glue that holds all medical terms together
- B. The basic form around which the final word is formed
- C. The main part of the word
- D. The foundation of the word
- E. Gives you a clue as to what you're dealing with
- F. Specifies the body part
- G. Combining vowel, usually "o" or "i", joins the root with a prefix or suffix, or another root

III. Basic Word Parts: Combining Vowels

- A. Are not used if the word root or suffix begins with a vowel
- B. Example:
 - 1. Encephal (o) (root meaning brain)
 - a. Encephalitis (means inflammation of the brain)
 - i. “itis” is a suffix meaning “inflammation”
 - ii. “itis” starts with an “i” so a combining vowel is not needed

- b. Encephalogram
- i. “gram” is a suffix meaning “tracing” or “record”
- ii. “gram” does not start with a vowel
- iii. The combining vowel “o” is used

IV. Basic Word Parts: Prefixes

- A. Appear at the beginnings of words
- B. Tell “how, why, where, when, how much, how many, position, direction, time. or status”
- C. Give us a clue of what to expect in a word’s meaning
- D. Serve to further define the word root

V. Basic Word Parts: Suffixes

- A. Appear at the ends of words
- B. Tell us what is happening with a specific body part or system
- C. Entail what is wrong with you or the procedure used to diagnose
- or fix it

VII. Analysis

- A. Your goal is to learn the tools of word analysis
- B. This will make the understanding of complex terminology easier
- C. Learning to divide words into basic elements will help you to interpret them
 - 1. Basic elements: roots, suffixes, prefixes, combining vowels
 - 2. Example:
 - a. *Gastroenterology*
 - GASTR / O/ ENTER / O / LOGY

VIII. Rules to Remember

- A. Read the meaning of medical terms from the suffix back to the first part of the word
- B. Drop the combining vowel (usually o) before a suffix beginning with a vowel – ***gastric not gastroic***
- C. Retain the combining vowel between two roots in a word

IX. Spelling is essential

- A. Many words are pronounced alike but spelled differently and have entirely different meanings
- B. Examples
 - 1. **Ileum** is a part of the small intestine
 - 2. **Ilium** is a part of the pelvic, or hip, bone

