



Physician's Lexicon

From Telepathy To Telekinesis

The English writer, Frederic Myers [1843 – 1901], was seeking a word to define communication between two minds by means other than the customary sensory channels. Finding none, he invented the word, 'telepathy' literally, feeling from afar. Two Greek roots were employed: *telo-*, meaning far off, distant; and *patho-*, meaning feeling or disease. [Pathologists have managed to confine its use to disease-states solely as in pathogen, pathology and pathos. The word, telepathy, could easily have meant, diseases from afar.]

Medicine has employed the *tel-* prefix in a variety of terms: telephone, telangiectasia, telomere, telephase, teledendron, telemetry, telencephalon, telalgia and recently, teleradiography. And in general usage, such additional words as

telethon, television, telephoto, telekinesia, teletype and televangelism.

An earlier Greek word, *telos*, conveys a slightly different sense, that of ultimate destiny rather than mere distance. Thus the *telos* of an acorn is the oak tree and the ultimate *telos* of the blastomere is the newborn infant. The medical term teleology incorporates this meaning when it describes the ultimate purposes and destinies within the world of nature. The class of bony fish, called the teleosts, represents another example of the Greek prefix denoting ultimate destiny, in this case, evolutionary destiny. And the son of Odysseus and Penelope was named Telemachus, meaning fighting from afar [an understandable adolescent acting-out given the tendency of Odysseus to stay away from his home for decades at a time.]

The Romans, a more earthy ethnic group, also employed a *tell-* prefix [named after Tellus, goddess of the earth], denoting anything pertaining to the earth. Thus, geologic words such as tellurian, telluride and the element, tellurium are formed.

Yet another Latin word, *tela*, may be easily confused with the root terms and derivative medical terms listed above. A *tela* signifies a web or netlike structure, as in *tela choroidea* or *tela conjunctiva*.

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VITAL STATISTICS

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Rhode Island Monthly Vital Statistics Report Provisional Occurrence Data from the Division of Vital Records

Underlying Cause of Death	Reporting Period			
	October 2007	12 Months Ending with October 2007		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	239	2,749	257.0	3,809.0
Malignant Neoplasms	202	2,243	209.7	5,767.5
Cerebrovascular Diseases	27	386	36.1	612.0
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	53	552	51.6	8,625.5
COPD	29	415	38.8	285.0

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	April 2008	12 Months Ending with April 2008	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	857	12,912	12.1*
Deaths	825	10,094	9.5*
Infant Deaths	(3)	(84)	6.5#
Neonatal Deaths	(2)	(61)	4.7#
Marriages	348	6,692	6.3*
Divorces	268	3,053	2.9*
Induced Terminations	371	5,020	388.8#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	52	857	66.4#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(47)	(781)	60.5#
20+ weeks gestation	(5)	(76)	5.9#

(a) Cause of death statistics were derived from the underlying cause of death reported by physicians on death certificates.

(b) Rates per 100,000 estimated population of 1,067,610

(c) Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL)

Note: Totals represent vital events which occurred in Rhode Island for the reporting periods listed above. Monthly provisional totals should be analyzed with caution because the numbers may be small and subject to seasonal variation.

* Rates per 1,000 estimated population

Rates per 1,000 live births