

# Physician's Lexicon

## The Apocalyptic Prefix

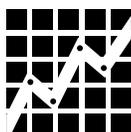
**The Greeks, it has been said, have a word** for it. Actually, they had countless words expanded yet further by the artful employment of many meaningful prefixes and suffixes. The standard English-language medical dictionary, for example, lists 106 technical words beginning with the simple prefix, *apo-*, meaning away from, off, next to, or asunder [as in apomorphine, apoenzyme, apoferritin or apocleisis]. Actually, not all of these 106 medical terms beginning with the letters, *apo* are intended to be examples of the *apo-* prefix. A technical term such as apodia [think of it rather as a-podia than apo-dia] contains the Greek privative prefix, *a-*, [meaning not] attached to the basic root *-podia* and thus producing a word signifying a creature without feet. Other "false" *apo* words include such terms as apolitical or apollonian.

The non-medical employment of the *apo-* prefix includes the English term, apology, derived from the Latin, *apologia* and earlier from the Greek *logos*, meaning speech. Thus an apologue originally defined a moral truth or fable, an explanation often couched in parallel metaphors; and then, gradually the word defined either an explanation or justification for having caused injury; or sometimes, even a vindication for such events. An apostasy, representing a departure from one's doctrine or religion, is from the Greek root meaning stasis or standing and the prefix, *apo-* and thus signifying a standing apart, a departure from a formerly held credo or even a heresy [also from the Greek, meaning an alternate doctrine]. It must be distinguished, however, from words such as apostolic or apostle.

The word, apostrophe, joins the prefix, *apo-*, with the Greek word, *strephein*, meaning to turn or to twist, and through a succession of meanings [including the turning movements of the Greek chorus on the stage], to indicate, currently, a punctuation sign to signify an omitted letter. The word also describes an aside, or digression, in a formal speech. An apostrophe is also used to denote the possessive sense [eg., Zeus's daughter]. The word, apocalypse, literally to uncover or to disclose, has come to signify, ecclesiastically, a revelation.

The medical use of *apo-* includes apoplexy [literally, to strike aside or asunder], apothecary [literally, away from the storehouse] and aponeurosis [from an older meaning of neuron as a sinew].

— STANLEY M. ARONSON, MD



RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
DAVID GIFFORD, MD, MPH  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

## VITAL STATISTICS

EDITED BY COLLEEN FONTANA, STATE REGISTRAR

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

Underlying Cause of Death	Reporting Period			
	November 2007	12 Months Ending with November 2007		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	191	2,716	253.9	3,687.0
Malignant Neoplasms	211	2,277	212.9	5,962.5
Cerebrovascular Diseases	24	383	35.8	642.0
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	31	515	48.1	8,076.0
COPD	36	423	39.5	322.5

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	May 2008	12 Months Ending with May 2008	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	956	12,827	12.0*
Deaths	778	10,032	9.4*
Infant Deaths	(9)	(86)	6.7#
Neonatal Deaths	(9)	(64)	5.0#
Marriages	636	6,802	6.4*
Divorces	178	2,955	2.8*
Induced Terminations	401	5,045	393.3#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	49	835	65.1#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(45)	(761)	59.3#
20+ weeks gestation	(4)	(74)	5.8#

(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