Physician's Lexicon

The Fruitful Words of Obstetrics

The Latin word, parere, meaning producing or bearing, appears in obstetrical parous, parity and viviparous [producing living young; see also words such as vivid and vivisection.] Parity, from the Latin, partus meaning equal, generates a word spelled the same as the obstetrical ’parity’ but with a different meaning of equality (as in the phrase ‘military parity.’)

Parturient, meaning to be in labor, about to deliver, descends from the Latin, parturire, (literally, to wish to bring forth) and ultimately from paeré, to bring forth. Cognate words include post-partum, parity, multiparous, oviparous, puerperal, parent and even repertory (reparare).

Labor, meaning to toil, to experience hardship, to work, is derived from the Latin, labare, meaning to totter, to slip out. Derivative words include laboratory, belabor, elaborate and collaboration.

Obstetrician, is from the Latin, obstetricus, literally meaning, ’she who stands before’, from the Latin prefix, ob- [before] and stare [to stand]. That is, a midwife.

Midwife in an Old German term literally meaning ‘with woman’; the mid-prefix is equivalent to the German, mit, meaning with.

Fecundity is from the Latin, fecundus, meaning fruitful, fertile ; literally, “that which is produced.” And fertile derives from the Latin, fertili and ultimately from ferre, to carry to bear, to produce.

— STANLEY M. ARONSON, MD

References


Disclosures of Financial Interests

The authors have no financial interests to disclose.

Correspondence

Stefan Gravenstein
E-mail: sgravenstein@riqio.sdps.org

9SOW-RI-GERIATRICS-052009

The analyses upon which this publication is based were performed under Contract Number 500-02-R102, funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Health and Human Services, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. The author assumes full responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the ideas presented.