

The findings of this study indicate that health care providers play a critical role in the acceptance of influenza vaccine by pregnant women. To improve influenza vaccination coverage among pregnant, health care providers should use the first prenatal care encounter to educate women about the risk of influenza complications during pregnancy and the protective effect of influenza vaccination on women and their infants, and providers should offer vaccination at the earliest opportunity during influenza season.

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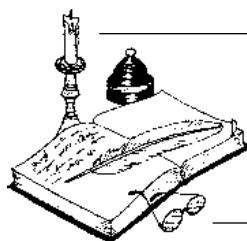
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The authors have no financial interests to disclose.

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The CDC published a related article in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Health: "Receipt of Influenza Vaccine During Pregnancy Among Women With Live Births - Georgia and Rhode Island, 2004-2007"; MMWR 2009;58; 972-5. Abstract at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5835a2.htm>



# Physician's Lexicon

## Words Foretelling the Future

**Long before the profession of medicine** discovered effective interventions to alay the symptoms of human ailment, it assumed the heavy, and often hazardous, burden of foretelling the medical futures of patients, more an act of blind courage than clinical insight. The vocabulary of medical prediction, of prognosis, is therefore rich in synonyms variously derived from Latin, Greek and Old German.

The augurs were a collegium of priests in ancient Rome assigned the duty of foretelling and interpreting the future. They observed the flights of birds (their direction, species, numbers) and then translated the gathered data to prophesy the future – whether it be the outcome of a war just beginning, the felicity of an imminent marriage or the early phases of an illness in a patient. Augury, then, becomes the art of revealing the future by the trained interpretation of natural signs, such as the flight of birds or even the configuration of tea-leaves upon the inner surface of a cup. The word inaugurate originally meant to divine

the future and thus to consecrate or to install its reality. It has now come to mean to begin formally. Augur, in turn, was probably descended from an older Latin word, *augos*, meaning to increase (as in the English word, augment) and belatedly gave rise to words such as august, meaning to increase in majesty, to make venerable.

Omen comes from a Greek word meaning to think or to discern the details of the future. It is the root of the English words ominous and abominable.

The word, prognosis is from the Greek, *gnosis*, meaning knowledge and the prefix *prae-* meaning before.

Prophecy is from the Latin, and earlier from the Greek, *propheta*, meaning one who speaks for the gods; and the verb, to predict, stems from the Latin *prae-* meaning before and *dicere*, to speak. To portend is also from the Latin, *portendere*, meaning an omen; and is based earlier on *tendere*, meaning to stretch or to move in a certain direction. A portent is therefore an omen, usually foreboding, giving rise to the

English word, portentious, equivalent in meaning to ominous or menacing. Presage is similarly of Latin derivation and is based on the root, *sagire*, meaning to perceive [see the English word, sagacity.] Revelation is from the Latin, *revelationum*, meaning to uncover, to reveal. And apocalypse, is derived from the Greek, literally meaning away from the covering, an uncovering or a revelation. When capitalized, it is a synonym for the Scriptural Revelation of St. John the Divine.

Soothsaying descends from the Old High German word, *soth*, meaning truth or reality. And thus a soothsayer is one who reveals, often for a fee, the unembellished, truthful future. For obvious reasons, most soothsayers, sometimes called mountebanks (from Italian, *montimbanco*, to mount a bench) or charlatans (from Italian, *ciallare*, to prattle), were often itinerant hucksters (from the Dutch, *hokester*, meaning to bear on one's back), leaving town before the future became the present.

— STANLEY M. ARONSON, MD