

# Physician's Lexicon

## A Rhetoric Hank of Hair

**Thrix** is a Greek combining term meaning hair or hair-like. It appears unaltered in the name given to the genus of bacteria called *Clonothrix*, the *clono-* prefix from the Greek meaning twig-like. The *thrix* root in Greek transforms into the Latin, *tricho-*, forming a multitude of medical terms pertaining to hair or hair-like appendages.

A hairy tongue is best described by the more discrete Latin term, *trichoglossia*; *-glossa* being Greek for the tongue (as in words such as glossary, glossolalia – speaking in tongues - and glossitis). *Trichomegaly* is the medical word for long eyelashes; *trichosis* is a word for diseases of hair but, confusingly, the adjective, *trichotomous* means that which is divided into three parts.

A *trichobezoar* is an ancient word for a mammalian hair-ball. The *bezoar*

root is a Persian word for a medical antidote.

*Bezoars* (either *trichobezoars*, hair collections, or *phytobezoars*, collections of calcifying hair of plant origin following the ingestion of fibers of plant origin such as the rinds of unripened persimmons) were highly prized objects in alchemy, both in medieval Europe and Asia. They were said to counteract various poisons. *Trichobezoars*, when further along than the stomach, are called *enteroliths*; and when in the colon, *fecoliths*. The *lith* root is Greek for stone as in technical terms such as *lithotomy*, *lithography* or *lithotripsy*.

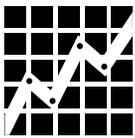
The *tricho-* root may also convey the sense of hairlike. And thus when a nematode worm was encountered in human muscle in 1866, the pathologist Bernhard Rupprecht named it *Trichina*.

It is now called *Trichinella spiralis* and the disease, *trichiniasis*.

A genus of intestinal round worm was given the name *trichuris*, two Greek roots meaning hairlike tail. The Greek root, *uro-*, meaning tail, is seen in words such as *urochord* and *uropod* but not urology or urolith.

Then there is yet another pathogen bearing the *tricho-* root, the flagellate protozoan parasite now called *Trichomonas vaginalis* and its associated disease, *trichomoniasis*. The parasite bears a whip-like extension. In Latin the word *flagellatus* defines a whip as in English words such as *flagellation*, meaning to scourge or whip oneself generally for a religious purpose.

– 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			
	June 2009	12 Months Ending with June 2009		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	193	2,502	238.1	3,275.0
Malignant Neoplasms	193	2,261	215.2	5,912.5
Cerebrovascular Diseases	38	375	35.7	789.5
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	49	535	50.9	8,793.0
COPD	37	460	43.8	272.5

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	December 2009	12 Months Ending with December 2009 (See Special Note)	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	1,003	12,369	11.6*
Deaths	817	9,585	9.0*
Infant Deaths	(4)	(86)	7.0#
Neonatal Deaths	(4)	(72)	5.8#
Marriages	309	6,233	5.8*
Divorces	308	3,180	3.0*
Induced Terminations	283	4,224	341.5#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	25	751	60.7#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(20)	(661)	53.4#
20+ weeks gestation	(5)	(90)	7.3#

(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 1,050,788

(c) Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL)

NOTE: Since resuming this VITAL EVENTS table in the January 2010 issue, HEALTH posted the number of records available approximately one month before the publication date. The data did not include any late records received after that date, which were considerable in some fields. This month's table—which covers the year 2009—includes any previously uncounted late records in the cumulative number and rate. Beginning with January 2010 data, any late data will be included in the posted month, which was the practice in previous years. Monthly provisional totals in both tables 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