



Physician's Lexicon

The Celestial Bodies: The Moon, Sun and Stars

Well before laboratory medicine yielded insights into the prognosis of human disease and provided prophetic hints of the future, astrology declared that the configuration of the stars and the movements of the sun and moon foretold the character and destiny of humans and their ailments. It is not surprising, therefore, that so many terms, some medical, have lexical roots in the Greek and Latin words for the celestial bodies.

The Greek and Latin words for moon, *men* and *mensis*, have given rise to a cluster of words such as mensal, menology, all pertaining to the moon or to aspects of the lunar cycles. In medical vocabulary the following words are encountered, based upon the similarity between lunar and uterine bleeding cycles: menstruation, menstruum, menopause (*pausis*, Greek, meaning to cause to cease.). The related Greek word

meniskos (as in medical terms such as meniscus and meniscocyte, an obsolete term for a sickle-cell) describes a lunar crescent.

Akin to the Latin *mensis* is the companion word, *mensus*, meaning a measure as in technical words such as mensuration, measure, commensurate, dimension, immense and meter.

The name of the moon goddess in Latin is *Luna*; and many medical nouns and adjectives stem from this name, including lunacy, lunatic (moonstruck), Lunaria (moonwort) and semilunar.

Moon-associated words are more common in medical vocabulary than are words pertaining to the sun. Nevertheless there are a number of terms derived from the Greek root, *helio-*, meaning the sun, and the Latin, *sol*.

General words using the root, *helio*, include heliofugal (flying away from the

sun), heliocentric, heliotrope (plants of the borage family such as the Jerusalem artichoke, plants that turn toward the sun); and biomedical words such as helium, heliotherapy, heliophobia (fear of sunlight). The similar Greek root, *helix*, means a spiral as in words such as helicopter (literally, a spiral-wing.)

The Latin, *sol*, gives rise to English terms such as solar, sultry, solstice, parasol; and medical terms such as solar plexus and Solanaceae (nightshade plants).

The Greek word for star, *astron*, has given rise to medical words such as astrocyte [star-shaped cell], astrocytoma, astrobiology and astroid (star-shaped), but not astragalus, the ankle bone, which is derived from a Greek word meaning oyster-shell.

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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			
	July 2009	12 Months Ending with July 2009		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	182	2,428	231.1	3,097.5
Malignant Neoplasms	182	2,285	217.5	6,222.5
Cerebrovascular Diseases	35	421	40.1	799.5
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	61	570	54.2	9,477.5
COPD	47	492	46.8	312.0

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	January 2010	12 Months Ending with January 2010	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	978	12,298	11.5*
Deaths	414	9,178	8.6*
Infant Deaths	(1)	(76)	6.2#
Neonatal Deaths	(14)	(77)	6.3#
Marriages	210	6,217	5.8*
Divorces	307	3,257	3.1*
Induced Terminations	335	4,119	334.9#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	49	708	57.6#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(43)	(623)	50.7#
20+ weeks gestation	(6)	(85)	6.9#

(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 1,050,788

(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