

# Physician's Lexicon

## A Palette of Palliative Terms

A modest knowledge of Greek etymology can be a dangerous thing. A brief appraisal of the numberless words – both medical and non-medical – beginning with the prefix, *pal-*, for example, can result in utter etymological confusion unless one is aided by a reliable Greek dictionary.

Beginning with words employing the *pale/paleo-* prefix: such terms are derived from the Greek root meaning ancient or primitive, and from a still older prefix signifying something that is backward or long ago. And thus, it gives rise to words such as paleobotany (botany of fossil plants), paleography (study of ancient writings), Paleolithic (pertaining to the Stone Age) and paleopathology (pathology of fossil remains).

The prefix, *pali-*, on the other hand, is Greek meaning repetition, renewal or the sense of returning again, as is words such as palindrome (a sentence reading the same

backwards or forwards; and the *drome* root meaning course, appearing in words such as hippodrome and aerodrome). Other cognate words include palilalia (pathologic repetition of sounds) and palikinesia (involuntary repetition of movements). The sense of repetition appears in the word palimpsest (a parchment which has been scrapped clean to make way for a new document, text or painting.) Palingenesis, meaning a rebirth or regeneration, again relies upon the sense of repetition.

The prefix, *pall-*, is similarly Greek and generally means to quiver as in medical words such as pallesthesia (vibratory sense). But words such as palliate are etymologically distinguishable and are derived from the Latin, *pallium*, meaning a cloak. Thus the clinical act of palliation means to cloak, or mitigate, symptoms such as pain. But then there are words such as pallidum and globus pallidus

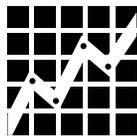
which stem from the Latin, *pallidus*, meaning pale or without color, as seen also in English words such as pallor or pale.

Other words beginning with the *pal-* prefix include Palestine, descended, through the Greek, and thence from the Hebrew, *Pelesbeth*, meaning land of the Philistines.

A palette, a painter's working board, derives from the Latin, *pala*, meaning a shovel, a stake or a piece of wood. A palisade, then, defines a fence made of many stakes.

Finally, a handful of words are derived from the name, Palladio, (such as palladian, defining certain renaissance architectural features) after the famous architect, Andrea Palladio (1518-1580), and Pallas, the goddess Athene's surname, which stem from earlier Persian words defining maidens.

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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 |                                   |           |          |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------|
|                                       | August 2009      | 12 Months Ending with August 2009 |           |          |
|                                       | Number (a)       | Number (a)                        | Rates (b) | YPLL (c) |
| Diseases of the Heart                 | 180              | 2,390                             | 227.4     | 3,092.6  |
| Malignant Neoplasms                   | 203              | 2,265                             | 215.6     | 6,212.5  |
| Cerebrovascular Diseases              | 31               | 417                               | 39.7      | 852.0    |
| Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide) | 54               | 577                               | 54.9      | 9,701.0  |
| COPD                                  | 38               | 501                               | 47.7      | 337.0    |

| Vital Events             | Reporting Period |                                     |        |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
|                          | February 2010    | 12 Months Ending with February 2010 |        |
|                          | Number           | Number                              | Rates  |
| Live Births              | 854              | 12,229                              | 11.5*  |
| Deaths                   | 750              | 9,134                               | 8.6*   |
| Infant Deaths            | (4)              | (83)                                | 6.8#   |
| Neonatal Deaths          | (1)              | (70)                                | 5.7#   |
| Marriages                | 240              | 6,154                               | 5.8*   |
| Divorces                 | 248              | 3,186                               | 3.0*   |
| Induced Terminations     | 433              | 4,170                               | 341.0# |
| Spontaneous Fetal Deaths | 48               | 687                                 | 56.2#  |
| Under 20 weeks gestation | (42)             | (607)                               | 49.6#  |
| 20+ weeks gestation      | (6)              | (80)                                | 6.5#   |

(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