

Physician's Lexicon

From Catheters to Cathedrals

The catheter is a hollow surgical tube employed to drain fluids—typically urine—from an interior cavity of the body. The word is derived from a Greek root, *catalcatha-*, translated as “something let down” and is cognate with the Latin, *jacere*, meaning to throw, to spurt forth, as in the English, ejaculation.

The cathode, the negative pole of a battery, uses the Greek prefix, *cata-*, meaning downward, and appears in related words such as catabolism, cataclysm, catacomb (underground cemetery), catalepsy, catalogue (to count the words down), catalyst (able to go down, to dissolve), cataract (a falling of the water; and used to describe ocular opacities because they sometimes emerge as an obscuring shade resembling a waterfall).

The *cata-* root has also come to signify downwardness, as in cleaning or purifying or “getting down to fundamentals.” A ca-

tharsis, accordingly, is defined as a purging, paradoxically a liberation of the emotions, and pharmacologically as an intestinal purgation or cleansing. Catatonia, describes a severe form of schizophrenic dementia and is often highlighted by episodes of stupor and muscular rigidity. The *-tonia* root is also from a Greek word meaning to stretch or produce tension. The derivative Latin, *tendere*, also means to stretch.

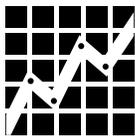
A catastrophe is defined as a disastrous happening, a terrible mishap, a downfall. It also uses the prefix, *cata-*, signifying the sense of going down and the Greek root, *strophe*, meaning a twisting or turning as in English words such as apostrophe and strophanthin.

The adjective, catholic, is a fusion of the Greek *catha-*, and *holos* (meaning entire or total, as in words such as holograph), thus offering the meaning of universal.

The word cathedral is a shortening of the phrase, *ecclesia cathedralis*, meaning the seat of a bishop. A *cathedra*, in Greek, indicates a contrivance to sit down, a chair. And the phrase, *ex cathedra*, means from the chair, and, by further inference, from the chair of someone, such as a bishop, a person in authority. The phrase, *ex cathedra*, has come to indicate any authority, secular or ecclesiastic.

A scattering of additional nouns use the *cathal/cata-* prefix. The Catharists—meaning those who are spiritually cleansed—were a medieval sect of Christians centered in southern France. The feminine name Catherine signifies one who is cleansed, pure. But Cathay, a poetic name for China, is derived from a Tartar word possibly meaning kingdom.

— 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			
	October 2009	12 Months Ending with October 2009		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	192	2,337	222.4	3,147.5
Malignant Neoplasms	204	2,259	215.0	6,317.5
Cerebrovascular Diseases	46	420	40.0	787.0
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	47	574	54.6	9,548.5
COPD	37	521	49.6	292.5

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	April 2010	12 Months Ending with April 2010	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	1,005	12,183	11.4*
Deaths	799	9,098	8.5*
Infant Deaths	(5)	(78)	6.4#
Neonatal Deaths	(4)	(65)	5.3#
Marriages	313	6,118	5.7*
Divorces	291	3,235	3.0*
Induced Terminations	396	4,231	347.3#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	91	720	59.1#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(84)	(644)	52.9#
20+ weeks gestation	(7)	(76)	6.2#

(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