

Physician's Lexicon

The Ubiquitous -nyms of English

An earlier Greek word, meaning the father's name, evolved into the Latin, *patronymicus*, an adjectival noun meaning 'from the father's name.' The Latin, *patri-*, meaning father, appears in words such as patrician, patricide, patrimony, patriot and patrilineal. A name descended from the mother, on the other hand, is called a metronym. The Greek, *metro-*, ultimately meaning uterine, appears in words such as parametrium, endometritis and metropolis (mother city.) A wide range of English words stem from the older Greek root, *-nym*, both in medical and general usage.

An acronym defines a word composed of the initial letters of a well-known phrase such as FEMA or NATO. The Greek prefix, *akron-*, meaning an extremity or utmost, appears in numerous medical terms such as acrodynia, acromegaly and acromion (the lateral extremity of the scapula) and in general terms such as acrobatic, acrophobia and

acropolis. But, contrariwise, words such as acrimony, acridine and acrid are descended from the Latin, *acer*, meaning sharp or bitter; and is earlier related to the Greek *aker*, meaning fields or pastures leading to such English words as acrid, agrarian and acre.

An eponym is a real or mythical name used to describe a larger social unit such as a clan, tribe or nation in words such as Napoleonic or Caesarian. And, in the case of medicine, the name of a disease, procedure or biologic group named after its discoverer such as Pavlovian psychology. Fractures such as Colles', Duverney's and Potts' are named after their medical discoverers.

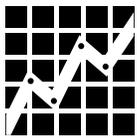
A homonym, from the Greek root meaning the same or similar, as in medical words such as homeopathy, homeostasis and homocentric; and general terms, defining words that sound alike but provide different meanings such as ale/ail, air/heir, aisle/isle and altar/alter. The list of such words is

wondrously long and reflects the many languages which had coalesced to form standard English.

The *-nyms* of English also include the synonyms, the antonyms and even the contronyms (those words which are spelled alike and pronounced alike but may lead to sharply divergent meanings. The word, cleave, for example, may mean to bring together; or, alternately, to split apart. And the word, awful, may mean filled with awe and wonder or, alternately, something worse than terrible.)

And finally, a pseudonym defines a fictitious or false name to hide the real authorship; a pen-name. The Greek prefix, *pseudo-*, means false or feigned, as in clinical words such as pseudarthrosis, pseudopod, and pseudotabes. Anatole France (1844-1924) once declared: "Chance is perhaps the pseudonym of God when he did not want to sign."

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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			
	December 2009	12 Months Ending with December 2009		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	206	2,339	222.6	3,199.5
Malignant Neoplasms	201	2,242	213.4	6,327.5
Cerebrovascular Diseases	38	425	40.4	879.5
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	43	570	54.2	9,863.5
COPD	44	515	49.0	357.5

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	June 2010	12 Months Ending with June 2010	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	1,076	12,153	11.4*
Deaths	791	9,140	8.6*
Infant Deaths	(10)	(82)	6.7#
Neonatal Deaths	(8)	(67)	5.5#
Marriages	716	5,975	5.6*
Divorces	276	3,229	3.0*
Induced Terminations	391	4,269	351.3#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	41	665	54.7#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(39)	(599)	49.3#
20+ weeks gestation	(2)	(66)	5.4#

(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 1,067,610.

(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