



Physician's Lexicon

Those Heart-felt Words

A surfeit of English words pertain to the heart and its many alleged emotions: heartache, heartburn, heartbreak, hearthrob, heartless, heartsick even hearty, indicating that the common folk appreciated the essential nature and function of this thoracic organ long before William Harvey explicated its physiology to the world of medicine.

The English word, heart, descends from the Saxon, *herta*, the Old High German, *herza*, and the Gothic, *hairto*. These many ancestral terms share meanings suggesting something that is in the center of or amidst.

The Classical Greek term for heart was *cardia*, and its Latin cognate, *cor*. These Mediterranean forebears have given rise to a wealth of terms pertaining to the heart and its many functions, alleged or verified.

Thus the Greek precursor, *cardia*, is transformed into English words, like cardiac, myocarditis, endocardium, cardiogram and cardialgia, an obsolete term for angina pectoris (Greek, *-algia*, meaning pain such as in myalgia or neuralgia). The word, cardinal, on the other hand, comes from the Latin genitive, *cardinis*, meaning a pivot, a hinge, or something essential. (the church prelate, cardinal, is an abbreviation of *cardinalis ecclesiae Romanae*).

The Latin, *cor* or *cordis*, has generated many English terms pertaining to the heart such as cordate (heart-shaped), cordial (literally, from the heart), core (something central) and courage (but not courteous which stems from the Latin, *cors* or *cohors*, meaning an enclosure or courtyard.)

The root, *cordis*, gives rise to a variety of essentially non-medical words such as accord, to be in harmony with, to agree, to be of one heart; and the many etymologic variants of accord such as discord, concord, record and even the musical instrument, the accordion. The word, courage and its many variants also stem from the Latin *cor*. And misericordia is Latin for compassion or mercy.

Coronary, on the other hand, is taken directly from the Latin, *coronarius*, and defines anything pertaining to the crown; it derives originally from the Latin, *corona*, a crown, a garland or something that encircles and is related etymologically to the Latin, *cor*. A coroner, thus, is a representative of the crown; and a coronary artery is a vessel that encircles the heart.

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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			
	February 2010	12 Months Ending with February 2010		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	196	2,363	224.4	3,209.5
Malignant Neoplasms	161	2,243	213.0	6,467.5
Cerebrovascular Diseases	36	446	42.3	859.5
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	44	602	57.2	10,438.5
COPD	45	500	47.5	480.0

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	August 2010	12 Months Ending with August 2010	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	1,013	12,007	11.2*
Deaths	762	9,125	8.5*
Infant Deaths	(5)	(86)	7.2#
Neonatal Deaths	(4)	(71)	5.9#
Marriages	796	6,024	5.6*
Divorces	238	3,305	3.1*
Induced Terminations	380	4,239	353.0#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	41	642	53.5#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(36)	(578)	63.3#
20+ weeks gestation	(5)	(64)	5.3#

(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 1,053,209.

(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