



Physician's Lexicon

The Oracular Words from Delphi

On the southern slopes of Mount Parnassus, in central Greece, stands an ancient shrine dedicated to the spirit of Apollo and the Oracle of Delphi. It was widely believed to represent the center of the earth; and within its sanctuary was the *omphalus*, a sacred stone representing the navel of the world. The shrine was initially dedicated to Gaia, mother goddess of all mankind; and the Greek word, *delphus*, signified the womb or uterus of all of humanity. (Uterus, a Latin term, descended from a Greek word, *udrios*, meaning belly.)

Apollo, in his many voyages, was believed to be carried over the seas by a fish without scales, now called the dolphin (and derived from the Greek, *delphus*). The oldest sons of the kings of France, and hence the heirs-apparent to the French throne, each inherited a heraldic banner adorned with two dolphins. Their title,

in time, came to be "Le Daulphin," and in more modern times, the Dauphin.

Delphic, as an adjective, has also come to mean anything pertaining to the oracle of Delphi, and in general, any prophetic announcement.

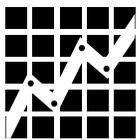
The uterine anomaly characterized by a double cavity is called didelphic meaning two uteruses. And *Didelphis* defines the genus of marsupials with bilocular uteri, a genus which includes the opossum.

The *delphus* root has assumed a broader meaning in the non-medical literature. Those nurtured within the same uterus—either simultaneously or sequentially—are said to be brotherly souls. And if those motivated by the non-violent, Quaker philosophy of William Penn (1644 – 1718) wished to form a city of brotherly love, it was inevitable that they would

name it, Philadelphia (from the Greek, *philos*, meaning loving or interested in, as in words such as philosophy, philanthropy, philharmonic, anglophile or philology but not philippic, an invective form of oratory named after the speeches of Demosthenes denouncing Philip of Macedon, or philistine, a word from the Akkadian, *palastu*. This Semitic root gave rise to the current geopolitical word, Palestine.

The botanical vocabulary is enriched by a number of words derived from the Greek word, *delphus*, including the delphinium plant commonly called the larkspur; and adelphous, meaning a plant with many stamens. The adjective, adelphous, may also mean brotherly or fraternal. And, accordingly, a university on Long Island bears the name Adelphi.

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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			
	May 2010	12 Months Ending with May 2010		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	197	2,312	219.5	3,202.0
Malignant Neoplasms	220	2,286	217.1	6,382.5
Cerebrovascular Diseases	29	452	42.9	755.0
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	61	628	59.6	10,778.0
COPD	47	508	48.2	595.0

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	November 2010	12 Months Ending with November 2010	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	935	11,893	11.1*
Deaths	857	9,172	8.6*
Infant Deaths	(10)	(70)	5.9#
Neonatal Deaths	(7)	(64)	5.4#
Marriages	306	6,097	5.7*
Divorces	283	3,356	3.1*
Induced Terminations	289	4,196	352.8#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	95	649	54.6#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(89)	(583)	63.6#
20+ weeks gestation	(6)	(66)	5.5#

(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 1,053,209. (www.census.gov)

(c) Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL).

Note: Totals represent vital events that 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