

Physician's Lexicon

Words in the Spiritual Domain

BREATHING, AS MUCH AS ANY HUMAN activity, has defined the sense of aliveness. And thus a number of ancient words denoting the act of breathing have come to form the vocabulary—medical and otherwise—of the many manifestations of life.

The Latin, *anima*, meaning the soul or breath of life and derived earlier from the Greek *animos*, has spawned a variety of nouns and adjectives of varied, and sometimes, contrary, meanings. Thus, to animate is to give life to, to enliven, to fill with breath, to exhibit vivacity. The mysterious process of instilling life into an otherwise non-living (inanimate) entity, whether it be Frankenstein's monster, Pinocchio or any one of the Disney Studio creatures, accordingly, is called animation.

But then we encounter the word, animosity, which currently means enmity

or ill-will. It seems to have arisen when the word, *animus* came also to mean vehemence or concerted boldness; and boldness, more often than not, leads to ill-will. And then there is *animus*, an English term currently defining antagonism, or hostile intent; and sometimes passionate courage or mission. Finally, there is *animism* which gives name to a religious belief that all living beings possess souls.

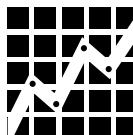
Words of breath-takingly varied meaning have been formed from the Latin, *anima*: equanimity, exhale, magnanimity, pusillanimous, even asthma.

The Latin, *spirare*, means to breathe. And from this word streamed a plethora of current English verbs including respiration, expire, inspire, conspire, aspire, transpire and even perspire and spirometer.

The root defining breathing, *spiro-*, came gradually to represent the soul and thus arose the broader theological implications within the word, spirit and its companion words: spiritual and inspirational.

Spirits, a plural word now, takes on a much more banal meaning: intoxicating fluids. Thus, terms such as whiskey are from the Gaelic, *usquebaugh*; and the French words for brandy, *eau de vie*, both mean, water of life. The Latin for whiskey, *spiritus frumenti*, literally means the soul of the wheat. Brandy is a contraction of the Dutch, *brandewijn*, meaning distilled wine. Vodka, from the Russian diminutive, little water, also conveys the same illusion that alcohol is somehow life-affirming.

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Rhode Island Monthly Vital Statistics Report Provisional Occurrence Data from the Division of Vital Records

VITAL STATISTICS

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Underlying Cause of Death	Reporting Period		
	February 2011	12 Months Ending with February 2011	
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)
Diseases of the Heart	216	2,313	219.6
Malignant Neoplasms	177	2,318	220.1
Cerebrovascular Diseases	39	457	43.4
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	43	622	59.1
COPD	57	529	50.2

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	August 2011	12 Months Ending with August 2011	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	1,115	11,825	11.2*
Deaths	769	9,963	9.5*
Infant Deaths	(5)	(67)	5.7#
Neonatal Deaths	(4)	(64)	5.4#
Marriages	781	6,166	5.9*
Divorces	278	3,390	3.2*
Induced Terminations	306	3,999	338.2#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	61	650	55.0#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(51)	(561)	56.3#
20+ weeks gestation	(10)	(87)	7.4#

(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 1,053,209. (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