



Physician's Lexicon

The Vocabulary of Medical School Administration

PHYSICIANS CONCERN THEMSELVES WITH THE intricacies of medical word origins principally when the words in question define the name of a disease, a therapeutic agent, an anatomic structure or its physiological function. Once beyond the rigors of medical school, rarely do physicians contemplate the etymologies of the given names of those who supervise or are otherwise instrumental in their professional education.

The Roman legions were structured in multiples of ten and a tenth of a Legion was called a cohort (from the Latin, *cohors*, an enclosed place; a courtyard typically, where legionnaires underwent their training.) A unit of one hundred legionnaires was called a century (Latin, *centum*, meaning one hundred) and its commander, a centurion. A military leader of ten, accordingly, was called a decanus (Latin, *decem*, meaning ten; and hence, *decanus*, a leader of ten; and earlier, from the Greek,

deca, also meaning ten.) Decanus, was the title given to monastery clerics who oversaw ten monks in training, and his office was called the decanate.

Many of the early European universities were outgrowths of religious centers devoted to scholarly inquiry; and so the administrative words first applied to the Roman military transferred readily to monastery administration and then, centuries later, to the supervisory structure of the universities and their professional colleges.

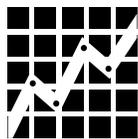
Decanus (and decanate) corrupted into words such as dean and deanery; and yet another lexical corruption of decanus, doyen, came to mean an authority, a specialist, the senior member of an assembly. And if a woman, then doyenne.

An administrator (Latin, past participle of *administrare*, meaning a manager) supervises an unspecified number of sub-

ordinates. The Latin prefix, *ad-*, generally means in the direction of or toward. The root, minister, comes from the Latin *minus-teros*, meaning a servant; and as a verb, to minister means to serve or perhaps even to heal and is the antonym of the Latin, *magister*. To minister, in contemporary English, has come to mean to care for.

Provost is from the Latin, *praepositus*, meaning to put forth, to preside. And chancellor, again from the Latin, *cancelarius*, is the title given to a high church official who by custom is seated near the latticed enclosure, called the chancel, in front of the altar. To cancel meant, originally, to be enclosed by a lattice but gradually it took on the meaning of something to be crossed out, to be cancelled. And cancellous, as an adjective to describe spongy bone, is from the same source.

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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 2011	12 Months Ending with May 2011		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	228	2,388	226.7	3,434.5
Malignant Neoplasms	174	2,255	214.1	5,611.5
Cerebrovascular Diseases	27	440	41.8	737.0
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	56	627	59.5	9,503.0
COPD	46	546	51.8	397.5

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	November 2011	12 Months Ending with November 2011	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	912	11,769	11.2*
Deaths	756	9,782	9.3*
Infant Deaths	(2)	(77)	6.5#
Neonatal Deaths	(2)	(60)	5.1#
Marriages	412	6,266	5.9*
Divorces	308	3,330	3.2*
Induced Terminations	289	4,096	348.0#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	47	637	54.1#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(41)	(545)	55.7#
20+ weeks gestation	(6)	(90)	7.6#

(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