

Medical Terminology Basics

10

CHAPTER

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After careful study of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Explain the influences of Greek and Latin on medical terminology, p. 56.
2. Identify the different parts of complex medical terms, p. 56.
3. Isolate a root word within a medical term, p. 57.
4. Describe how compound and combined terms are formed, p. 57.
5. Identify how a suffix and a prefix modify a word root, p. 58.
6. Follow the guidelines for decoding medical terms, p. 60.
7. Explain the importance of proper spelling and pronunciation when dealing with medical terms, p. 60.
8. Interpret common abbreviations and symbols in health care, p. 60.
9. Discuss how and when to use a medical dictionary, p. 61.

KEY TERMS

abbreviation
compound word

prefix
pronunciation

root
suffix

symbol
synonym

Understanding complex medical terminology, shaped largely by Latin and Greek influences, is an essential skill for all health care professionals. The proper use of a medical term not only adds precision to a document or discussion, but it also helps avoid costly medical mistakes, such as diagnostic or prescription errors.

To decode a term's meaning, first break the term down into its basic parts (prefix, root, and suffix), identify the meaning of each part, and then put these meanings together to determine the overall meaning of the term.

Proper spelling and pronunciation are also vital when communicating with patients and other health care professionals. Abbreviations and symbols are used regularly in health care, but staff members should follow their institution's guidelines when using them.

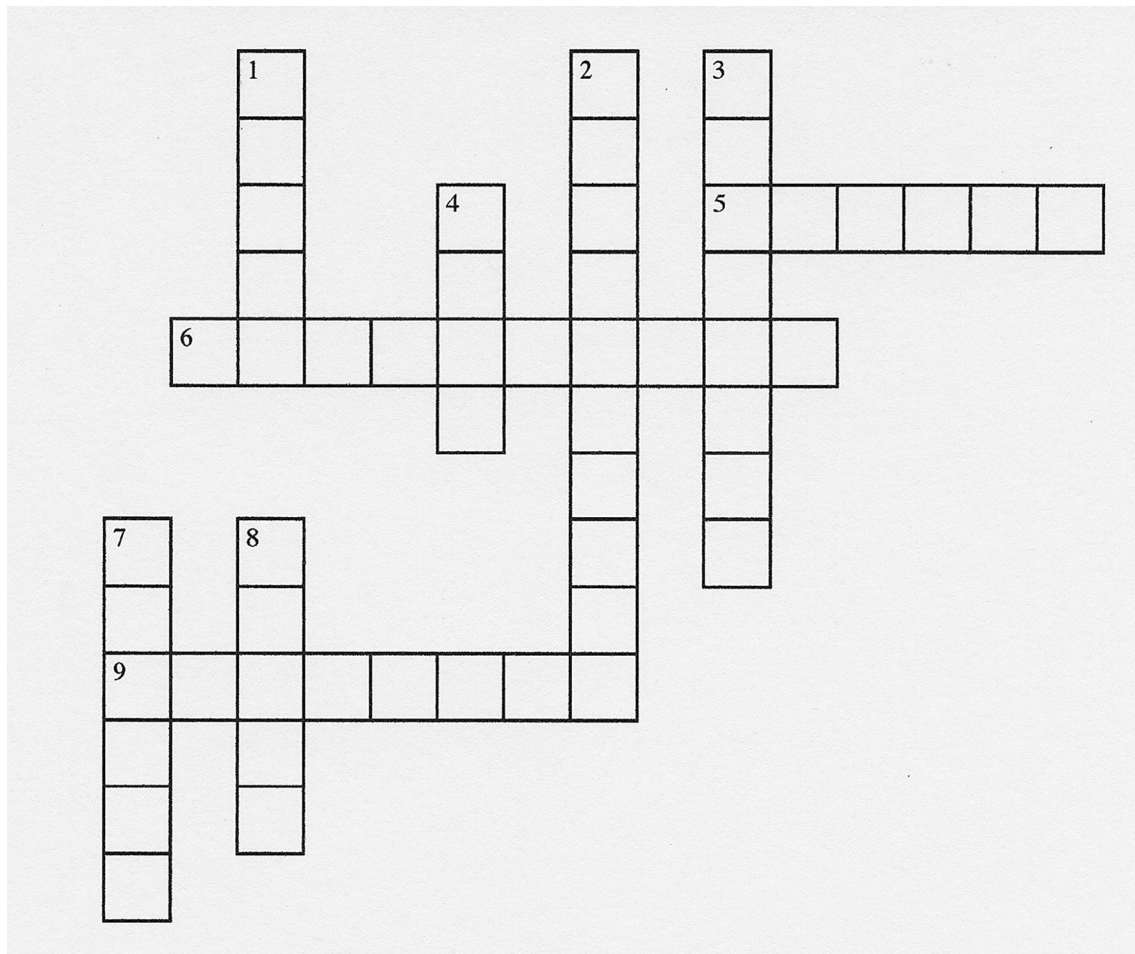
Medical dictionaries are valuable reference tools for all health care professionals because they provide meanings, spellings, pronunciations and more. Precision in medical terminology ensures clear communication among health care providers and between providers and their patients.

BUILD YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Objectives 1 and 2: Explain the influences of Greek and Latin on medical terminology, and identify the different parts of complex medical terms.

Crossword

Complete this crossword puzzle using clues across and down to familiarize yourself with how medical terminology works.



Across

5. Short element added at the end of a root to modify its meaning
6. Latin words are the origins of many what kind of terms in modern medicine?
9. Another word for the two or more parts that make up medical terms

Down

1. Language of learning in the Western world for many centuries
2. Physicians use Greek words to name these as well as structures and processes
3. Proper use of medical terminology among health care professionals adds and but also helps avoid costly medical _____, such as diagnostic or prescription errors
4. Fundamental element of every medical term and establishes the basic meaning of the term
7. Short element added before a root to modify its meaning
8. Medicine in this ancient culture laid the foundation for modern health care

Objectives 3 and 4: Isolate a root word within a medical term, and describe how compound and combined terms are formed.

Jumble

After answering the questions below about the components of medical terms, use the circled letters to form the answer to this jumble (punctuation [e.g., hyphens, apostrophes, etc.] counts as a character).

Clue: In order to figure out the very intricate medical terms in a patient's chart, the health care professional had to get to what? "_____" _ _ _ _ _

1. Most medical roots are derived from Greek or _ () _ _ and are used in combination with other word elements.
2. A word that contains more than one root is known as a _ () _ _ _ _ _ word.
3. When a suffix beginning with a consonant is added to a root, a _ () _ () _ is inserted between the root and suffix.
4. _ () _ _ _ _ _ _ () _ _ _ is the way in which a word is spoken.
5. A root joined with a combining vowel is called a _ () () _ _ _ _ _ () _ () _.
6. *Cardi* + *o* + *-logy* = cardiology (study of the () _ _ _ ()).
7. Many common combining forms describe _ _ _ _ _ () _ _ _ _ _ , organs, and colors in health care.

Objective 5: Identify how a suffix and a prefix modify a word root.

Complete the Table

Using your textbook if necessary, fill in the missing suffixes, prefixes, and definitions in this table.

Suffix/Prefix	Meaning
SYMPTOMATIC SUFFIXES (word ending that describe evidence of illness)	
–algia, –dynia	
	origin or production
–lysis	
–oid	
	involuntary contraction
DIAGNOSTIC SUFFIXES (word ending that describe a condition or disease)	
–ectasis	
	blood condition
–iasis	
	inflammation
–oma	
	falling or downward displacement
SURGICAL (OPERATIVE) SUFFIXES (word endings that describe a surgical [operative] treatment)	
–centesis	
–ectomy	
	surgical repair or reconstruction
–tomy	
	creation of an opening
GENERAL SUFFIXES (simple or compound suffixes that have general application)	
	process
–ia, –ism	
	structure or tissue
OTHER GENERAL SUFFIXES	
–gram	
	instrument for recording
–graphy	
	study
–logist	
–ist	
–meter	
	process of measuring

(continued)

Suffix/Prefix	Meaning
OTHER GENERAL SUFFIXES (<i>continued</i>)	
–scope	
	process of examination
–stasis	
NEGATION	
a–, an–	
POSITION/DIRECTION	
	away from
	to, toward, or near
e–, ec–, ex–	
en–, endo–, intra–	
inter–	
	alongside of or abnormal
sub–, infra–	
QUANTITY OF MEASUREMENT	
bi–	
hemi–, semi–	
	above or excessive
	below or deficient
macro–	
	small
poly–, multi–	
super–, supra–	
tri–	
	beyond or excessive
TIME	
brady–	
	fast
GENERAL PREFIXES	
con–, syn–, sym–	
	painful, difficult, or faulty
	good or normal
neo–	

Objective 6: Follow the guidelines for decoding medical terms.

Short Answer

After reading the section, “Decoding Medical Terms” in Chapter 10, answer the following questions and be as specific as you can.

1. Describe the process of decoding medical terms in three basic steps. _____

2. Decode *hypodermic* using the three basic steps. _____

3. Decode *encephalitis* using the three basic steps. _____

Objectives 7 and 8: Explain the importance of proper spelling and pronunciation when dealing with medical terms, and interpret common abbreviations and symbols in health care.

True or False?

After reviewing the sections, “Spelling and Pronunciation” and “Abbreviations and Symbols,” read the statements below and circle T if they are true or F if they are false.

1. T F Careless spelling errors can lead to misunderstandings—one misplaced or omitted letter can change the meaning of a word, sometimes with disastrous consequences.
2. T F Some words sound the same, but are spelled differently and have different meanings.
3. T F When letters are silent in a term, accidentally omitting them from a spelled word is not a big deal.
4. T F *Metro-* is one of three different combining forms that all can mean “uterus.”
5. T F Surrounding words and facts (or, context) is of little help when determining the meaning of a particular term.
6. T F Accepted pronunciations do not vary between regions or countries.
7. T F Usage of abbreviations varies among institutions, and the same abbreviation may have different meanings in different fields.
8. T F Acronyms and symbols, as well as emoticons, are other accepted shorthand means of communicating quickly in health care.
9. T F Symbols are often used in health care communication to indicate direction.
10. T F Symbols are often used in health care communication to indicate physical movements.

Objective 9: Discuss how and when to use a medical dictionary.**Continuing Investigation**

After practicing using the online tool MediLexicon at <http://www.medilexicon.com> as instructed by your textbook, explain how using medical dictionaries is important. How will you use one in your future career?

EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE**Essay Question**

After visiting http://msjensen.cehd.umn.edu/1135/med_term_activites to complete some of the medical terminology activities there, write a brief essay describing how these activities help you learn medical terminology. Also, explain why this knowledge will serve you well in your future career.