

Physician's Lexicon

A Lexical Bridge of Psighs

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, AS THE GRATEFUL recipient of a flood of words from older languages – its heterogenous rhetorical ancestry – has, of necessity, been obliged to accept certain sounds which seem to be, at first hearing, alien to it. Consider, for example, the numerous Greek words that begin with the letter *psi*- (the 23rd in the Greek alphabet), generating sounds for which there is no single equivalent in the English alphabet.

The Greek verb, *psallein*, defining the act of plucking, gave rise to the noun *psalmos*, meaning a song accompanied by the plucking of a harp. The verb also generated the English word, psaltery as well as psalm and psalmody. The anatomic term, psalterium (the third stomach of ruminants) was so named because of its mucosal surface's alleged resemblance to the pages of a book of psalms.

The Greek root, *psammo*- means sand and has given rise to medical terms such as psammoma (an archaic word for meningioma) and its adjective, psammomatous.

The Greek root, *pseudo*-, meaning false or erroneous, is incorporated into scores of medical words including pseudobulbar, pseudarthrosis, pseudocyst, pseudopod and pseudopregnancy; as well as non-medical terms such as pseudonym, pseudograph and pseudocarp (false fruit).

Psittakos, the Greek noun for the parrot, has entered the medical domain as the disease, psittacosis (parrot fever caused by *Chlamydia psittaci*.)

The Greek root, *psilo*-, meaning naked, deprived of hair or made smooth, generates such obscure medical terms as psilosis (baldness) and its adjective, psilotic.

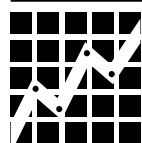
The Greek, *psora*, meaning an itch produces medical terms such as psoriasis,

psoriatic and Psoralea (a genus of plants in the pea family.)

Psyche was a maiden, in Greek mythology, much beloved by Eros; and as such she was personified in legend as the symbol of the uncontaminated soul. Scores of varied medical terms have since arisen from the pagan image of Psyche thus causing its underlying meaning to broaden, embracing such concepts as the mind, spirit, breath, even the soul. An avalanche of words have since arisen, derived from Psyche, including psychiatry, psychodelic, psychometrics and psychotherapy.

A psychrometer, an instrument to measure atmospheric moisture, however, is derived from the Greek, *psychros*, meaning cold, which in turn is related etymologically to the Greek, *cryos*, also meaning cold (as in cryogenics).

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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			
	April 2011	12 Months Ending with April 2011		
	Number (a)	Number (a)	Rates (b)	YPLL (c)
Diseases of the Heart	187	2,357	223.8	3,487.0
Malignant Neoplasms	177	2,301	218.5	5,846.5
Cerebrovascular Diseases	39	445	42.3	754.5
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	54	634	60.2	9,648.0
COPD	42	547	51.9	422.5

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	October 2011	12 Months Ending with October 2011	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	965	11,792	11.2*
Deaths	757	9,883	9.4*
Infant Deaths	(8)	(78)	6.6#
Neonatal Deaths	(5)	(65)	5.5#
Marriages	696	6,160	5.8*
Divorces	308	3,324	3.2*
Induced Terminations	326	4,078	345.8#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	46	685	58.1#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(37)	(593)	60.0#
20+ weeks gestation	(9)	(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