

Physician's Lexicon

The Generous Words of Heredity

IN THE BEGINNING WAS GENESIS, THE inaugural book of the Scriptural Pentateuch. The first word of the book, *bereshith*, (Hebrew, meaning "in the beginning"), was then translated to the Greek, *genesis*, which had earlier been derived from the Greek *genos*, meaning producing or coming into being, and still earlier from *gignesthai*, meaning to be born. And in the millennia since, there has been an abundance of words based upon, *gens*, the Latin descendant of the Greek, *genesis*, now meaning a tribe, a clan or a race.

At one philologic extreme is the current word, genocide, meaning the extermination of an ethnic group, a term newly devised by Allied jurists in 1944 to define the Holocaust. The *-cide* root is from the Latin, *caedere*, meaning killer

(as in words such as suicide, fratricide or homicide.)

In general, the many descendants of the Indo-European roots *gen-*, *gon-*, and *gn-* have all conveyed the sense of "that which produces" or, "that which comes to pass."

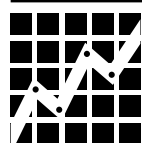
The Latin, *gens*, has specifically given birth to a plethora of English words such as genus, gender, generation, generic, eugenics, generous, genus, genie, ingenious and genius. Yet another brood of derivative words, often via Old French, include ingénue, gendre, genteel, gentile, gentle, and gentry (and even jaunty).

The *gon-* and *gn-* roots have taken on a somewhat male meaning as in the word, gonorrhea, literally meaning "the flow of semen", with the Greek suffix, *-rrhea*, meaning to flow (as in words

such as sialorrhea, diarrhea or rhinorrhea.) Medical terms employing the *gon-* root include gonocoele (a cyst of the epididymus), gonococcus, geneogenous (congenital, meaning, "derived from the parents") and gonocyte (primordial germ cell). The *gn-* root should not be confused with words employing the Greek root, *gnathos-*, meaning pertaining to the jaw, as in gnathic, gnathalgia (painful jaw), gnathology (the science of jaw dynamics) and even the English verb, gnash.

The current English vocabulary is sprinkled generously with additional words that harken back to *gens*, including: genealogy, genes, genitive, genitals, gendarme, ingenuity and ingenuous.

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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			
	July 2011	12 Months Ending with July 2011		
Diseases of the Heart	Number (a) 179	Number (a) 2,418	Rates (b) 229.6	YPLL (c) 3,532.5
Malignant Neoplasms	229	2,274	215.9	5,611.5
Cerebrovascular Diseases	35	450	42.7	724.5
Injuries (Accidents/Suicide/Homicide)	56	660	62.7	9,587.5
COPD	33	551	52.3	432.5

Vital Events	Reporting Period		
	January 2012	12 Months Ending with January 2012	
	Number	Number	Rates
Live Births	917	11,695	11.1*
Deaths	882	9,642	9.2*
Infant Deaths	(7)	(77)	6.6#
Neonatal Deaths	(6)	(58)	5.0#
Marriages	182	6,245	5.9*
Divorces	309	3,393	3.2*
Induced Terminations	327	4,104	350.9#
Spontaneous Fetal Deaths	55	631	54.0#
Under 20 weeks gestation	(46)	(534)	55.4#
20+ weeks gestation	(9)	(95)	8.1#

(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 1,052,567. (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