The Esoteric Prefixes of Medicine (Part I)
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Beyond the commonly used and generally understood binary prefixes of the basic medical vocabulary (e.g., *infra-*/*supra-*, *macro-*/*micro-*, *hypo-*/*hyper-*, etc.) are a gathering of less commonly employed prefixes which promote a more accurately defining of technical words – but simultaneously serve to make the language of medicine more arcane and therefore more dependent on a smattering of Greek (G) and Latin (L).

Some of these less commonly employed Greek/Latin prefixes serve to define, metaphorically at times, an animal such as *draco-*, (G) meaning dragonlike as in *draconculiasis* or *draconic*; *cyno-*, (G) meaning dog as in *cynophobia* or *cynic*; *hippo-*, (G) meaning horse as in *hippocampus* or *hippopotamus*; *ichthyo-*, (G) meaning fishlike, as in *ichthyosis* or *ichyophobia*; *echino-*, (G) meaning hedgehog or sea urchin as in *echinococcosis* or *echinosis*; and *bufo-*, (G) meaning toad-like as in *bufogenin* or *bufotoxin*.

Other prefixes refer to body parts such as *rostro-*, (L) meaning toward the beak or nose, as in *rostriform*; *rumen-*, (L) meaning gullet or throat as in *rumenotomy* or *rumination*; *rhino-*, (G) meaning nose as in *rhinitis* or *rhinocerus*; *labio-*, (L) meaning rim or lip as in *labiogingival* or *labioplasty*; *ischio-*, (G) meaning hip as in *ischiating* or *ischium* (but not *isch-,* (G) meaning to hold back as in *ischemia* or *ischuria*); *gnatho-*, (G) meaning jaw, as in *gnathology* and *gnathoglossus*; *tricho-*, (G) meaning hair as in *trichinosis* or *oligotrichia*; *ptero-*, (G) meaning wing as in *pterygium* or *helicopter*; *carpo-*, (G) meaning wrist or sometimes to seize as in *carpal bone* or *carpe diem* (L, seize the day); *metro-,* (G) meaning uterus or mother as in *metrorrhagia* or *metropolis*; *chiro-,* (L) meaning hand as in *chiropractic* or *chirurgical*; *cheilo-,* (G) meaning lips as in *cheilitis* or *cheiloplasty*; *cervico-,* meaning neck as in *cervix* or *cervical*; *prosopo-*, (G) meaning face or countenance, *prosopospasm* or *prosopalgia*.

Still other prefixes denote specific clinical features such as *sudor*, (L) meaning sweat as in *sudorosis* or *sudatorium*; *psora-,* (G) meaning itching as in *psoriasis* or *psoralea*; *causticus-,* (G,L) meaning burning as in *cauterization* or *holocaust*.

And, of course, *irido-,* (G) meaning rainbow as in *iridoplegia* or *iridescent*.
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On April 8, 1913, Dr. Franz Friedrich Friedmann of Berlin arrived in Rhode Island with his ‘turtle cure’ for tuberculosis. Dr. Friedmann described the vaccine as a strain of living tubercle bacilli extracted from the lungs of turtles and avirulent to human beings. He claimed to have cured over a thousand patients.

R.I. Gov. Aram J. Pothier, who caught wind of the turtle treatment from newspapers of the day, invited Dr. Friedmann to the Ocean State. Dr. Friedmann had arrived in New York City two months prior and began treating patients with his reptilian remedy in his Waldorf-Astoria hotel room. However, the desperate mobs of consumptives impelled the hotel manager to evict the ‘miracle’ worker, who was also an entrepreneur. While in New York, Dr. Friedmann formed a partnership with businessman Morris Eisner, and they began to plan a network of Friedmann Institutes.

Upon his arrival in Rhody, Dr. William L. Harris of the R.I. State Board of Health and Dr. W.G. Dwinell welcomed the ‘turtle man,’ as newspapers had dubbed Dr. Friedmann, at the Narragansett Hotel. He opined: “While here I shall instruct a certain number of physicians in the use of my vaccine. They will be permitted to observe me, and I shall explain from time to time the method of treatment. The Providence doctors will be the first to benefit by my discovery, as I have decided to give the secrets to them owing to the great courtesy they have shown to me and the cordial welcome I have received from your Governor,” reported the New York Times of April 9, 1913.

In short order, Dr. Friedmann visited the State Sanatorium at Wallum Lake, where 200 TB patients resided. Dr. Harry Lee Barnes, superintendent of the sanatorium, wrote about the doctor’s ‘turtle cure’ in the November 1913 issue of the Providence Medical Journal. “It was obvious that the reports of animal experiments with this vaccine were too meager and inconclusive, the case reports of human beings injected too scanty, and the time elapsed after such injections too short to be sure either of its safety or its value… I accordingly replied to Dr. Harris that the patients would be notified, after which they would be allowed to take it on their own responsibility.”

The patients harbored no such reservations and Dr. Friedmann injected 69 patients on the first day of his visit. On May 28, Dr. Friedmann administered a second injection to 43, and on June 8, Dr. Dwinell, who was in charge of the nascent Friedmann Institute in Providence, injected 40 additional patients.

In the Providence Medical Journal article several months later, Dr. Barnes reported his conclusions regarding the ‘turtle cure’: “The 120 patients having pulmonary tuberculosis have shown none of the immediate and wonderful results reported by Friedmann... On the contrary, about 17 percent have shown an increased activity of the disease…”

That spring, the New York Board of Health called a halt to the ‘turtle cure’ and outlawed “the use of living bacterial organisms in the inoculation of human beings for the prevention of treatment and disease.”

Dr. Friedmann dispatched forthwith to Germany, but not before selling the vaccine’s rights for $125,000, and $1.8 million in stock of the 36 Friedmann Institutes, which did not materialize, rendering the stock worthless. No doubt the turtles in the Berlin Zoo, the original source of the bacilli, breathed a sigh of relief.