

TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Any specialized terminology is a living organism which constantly adapts to current requirements of accurate communication. Indisputably, breakthroughs in science and technology greatly impact languages all over the world, leading to the coining of new words and syntagms which complement the terminological heritage.

Contrary to younger terminologies, such as the recently created field of AI, medical terminology has a long and rich history, which started when the Greek and Roman civilizations had reached their fame, and has evolved considerably since Hippocrates, whose medical treaties date back to the 4th and 5th centuries BC. For this reason, a significant number of medical words used in biomedical sciences and clinical medicine originate from Latin and Greek. Nevertheless, like younger fields of activity, the medical sciences have also been in continual progress, making use of more and more sophisticated tools and instruments and benefitting from well-equipped research centres and highly qualified researchers, inventors, academics and medical doctors. The updating of the medical working environment has paved the way for new linguistic units to name the brand new discoveries (be they elements of anatomy, disease-related terms or medical equipment).

The main objective of the present paper is to provide an overview of the characteristics of medical language, with a special focus on the specialized or technical vocabulary, which encompasses Greek and Latin words, semi-technical vocabulary and elements of the word stock. Moreover, it aims at emphasizing that it constantly incorporates new realities, which emerge as a result of the progress of scientific research and technical innovation.

Keywords: Latinisms, abbreviations, eponyms, metaphors, multilexical units

INTRODUCTION

The language of medicine should be accepted as the oldest terminology in the history of humankind, as anatomy, “the science of the science of the body is one of the oldest basic medical sciences, being first studied formally in Egypt (approximately 500 BC)” [1]. With such a lengthy history and after so many centuries of both quantitative and quantitative growth of names of parts of the human body, several known anatomists draw a list of names to be used as the official standard vocabulary for all health sciences. This list comprising a standard Latin anatomical nomenclature was published in 1895 as the *Basle Nomina Anatomica* (BNA). This is the “pioneer” terminology of anatomy was published in Basel, Switzerland, through the generous sponsorship of a few successful businessmen of the town. Little was known about terminology and terminologists when BNA was published. Ever since that time, *terminology* has come to