

The Importance of Medical Terminology in the Health Sector

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ABSTRACT

Medical terminology, rooted in the accumulation of knowledge within various fields of medicine, plays a crucial role in effective communication among healthcare professionals and ensuring patient safety. This study aims to explore the significance of medical terminology for students and professionals working in the health sector to effectively follow developments on medical platforms and communicate efficiently. Originating from Latin and Greek roots, medical terms have evolved over time, with English emerging as a prominent language in medical discourse. Standardized and common terminology is essential to navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of scientific and technological advancements in medicine, fostering a shared understanding among professionals across different disciplines. Proficiency in medical terminology is paramount for healthcare workers to accurately describe medical conditions, treatments, and procedures, thereby minimizing the risk of miscommunication and errors in patient care. By providing a common language for documentation, coding, and analysis of medical data, medical terminology education ensures uniformity and efficiency in healthcare practices. Moreover, familiarity with medical terminology enhances interdisciplinary collaboration and enables seamless communication among members of the healthcare team. This study underscores the critical role of medical terminology in promoting effective communication, advancing patient safety, and optimizing healthcare delivery.

Keywords: Medical terminology, health sector, communication, medical education, terminology updates

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INTRODUCTION

Terms are words commonly used in a specific profession, industry, science, sport, or art to denote a particular meaning. These terms are shaped by the accumulation of knowledge in the relevant field and the language in which this knowledge is produced. The field of medicine is a unique area with a history as old as humanity itself and a vast array of terms. Medical and health services, with their deep and universal history, progress with a common understanding of terms. The terms produced and used in the field are called medical terms or medical terminology. Most medical terms originate from Latin and Greek; however, due to the predominance of English as the language of science in recent years, English usages within medical terminology are also noteworthy (Cohen & Jones, 2020; Spiro & Heidrich, 1983; Wermuth & Verplaetse, 2019).

In today's world, where scientific and technological developments occur rapidly, many terms enter our language. Each new term can cause confusion in usage. To address these issues, the use of common and standardized terms is crucial. The global use of medical terms to create a common language in medicine is seen as a guarantee for world health (Köprülü, 2017).

Although medical terms are produced and used by the medical profession, they are also widely used in other health professions derived from medicine. Medical terms are crucial for the correct, fast, effective, and high-quality communication of health workers from different disciplines involved in multidisciplinary health services. Therefore, every health professional should have basic medical terminology knowledge to use medical terms effectively. Medical Terminology education plays a "key" role in the early stages of education in many health professions, primarily in medicine. Learning Medical Terminology well helps healthcare workers prevent mistakes in their work and create the necessary perception (Chabner, 2017; Miller, 1944).

This study examines the importance of Medical Terminology, a language used to describe the components and processes of the human body, medical procedures, diseases, disorders, and pharmacology, for health professions.

The Importance of Medical Terminology

Medical terminology is a scientific field that examines and teaches the principles of creating, writing, pronouncing, and interpreting terms that describe human anatomy and physiology (organs, systems, and functions), body regions, diseases, clinical applications, diagnostic imaging, and laboratory tests, surgeries, and diagnoses. The aim of medical terminology education is to ensure healthy communication among health professionals and to teach the necessary medical terms for a common language usage. In medical terminology education, it is essential to organize and analyze medical terms using a method called "term analysis." In term analysis, the structures of medical terms (root, prefix, and suffix) are examined separately and analyzed. Knowing how medical terms are pronounced, in addition to their written form, is also important. If the pronunciation of a medical term is not known, it becomes more challenging to learn and remember the term. Additionally, correct pronunciation of medical terms is important to prevent misunderstandings (Tekin & Ataş, 2020; Cankur, 2002).

Medical terminology knowledge is vital for the health sector as it enhances effective communication and job performance. It facilitates the work processes and helps health professionals understand precisely what needs to be done to assist a patient. Medical terms are used to accurately describe a patient's condition and the necessary procedures. Every treatment, prescription, or diagnosis in daily practice involves these terms. Therefore, improper communication or documentation of medical terms can lead to confusion and significant health risks for patients (Sand-Jecklin, 2007; Gordon, 1965).

Health sector employees extensively use medical terms in verbal and written communication. For example, medical documenters play an active role in the entire process of documenting and archiving health records. The accurate writing, coding, and analysis of medical data in health records depend on medical terminology knowledge. For these reasons, providing "Medical Terminology" education to students as part of health education is crucial for them to learn field-specific medical terms. Medical Terminology is important for using a standardized medical language, improving patient safety, and providing more effective care to patients (Ehrlich & Schroeder, 2014; Jones, 2012).

The Use of Scientific Medical Language

To advance science and produce new knowledge, the presence and use of a national language in scientific environments and an international scientific language for good communication are necessary. An important factor affecting the speed of scientific progress is the interaction among those dedicated to science. This interaction involves several stages, including the creation of new ideas, their development through positive or negative feedback, achieving a "correct" final product, and presenting this product to humanity. Effective communication among those producing science at all these stages depends on the presence of an appropriate terminological environment. When those directing science use the same scientific language, they are freed from the influence of linguistic differences and socio-cultural factors, contributing to scientific development through rapid communication (Cankur, 2002; Goble et al., 1994).

One of the most significant features of scientific language is its inclusion of unique terms not typically found in daily usage. Learning these terms begins intensely at the start of education and continues throughout professional or academic life. Success in learning and applying a scientific field is directly proportional to the success in learning the language of that field. For medicine, if we specify, the difficulty level of encountering these terms is relatively low in countries using the Latin alphabet in their daily language. Many terms used in medical terminology are also present in everyday language. In countries like Turkey, which adopted the Latin alphabet later and have fewer equivalents in their native language, learning the scientific language requires more effort. In societies using Latin letters only for scientific language purposes, achieving full learning is even more challenging. The fundamental terminological vocabulary acquired during the learning period is the first and most crucial factor determining future success. The commonly applied method for learning scientific language involves memorizing new terms as a block. The second method is learning the equivalents of these terms in the spoken language. While frequent repetition is necessary for the first method to retain the information, the retention period is longer in the second method. Learning the grammatical features of scientific language can also facilitate but is not mandatory. This approach allows students to understand the meanings,

formation, usage features of terms, and ultimately assimilate the subject as long-term or permanent knowledge (Cankur, 2002; Goble et al., 1994).

The Role of Medical Terminology in Patient Safety

Patient safety is the redesign of the entire system to prevent errors related to health services and eliminate the health problems caused by these errors. Errors such as incorrect diagnosis due to lack of terminological knowledge, failure to conduct necessary tests, or failure to take appropriate measures based on test results can occur. Quality communication and medical terminology knowledge among individuals in the health sector reduce such errors, thereby increasing patient safety. For instance, if a doctor knows all the medical history of a patient, including previous conditions and procedures, this knowledge helps the doctor prescribe safe and effective treatment for that patient. Conversely, if another healthcare worker confuses the terminology and incorrectly charts the condition or procedure, it can significantly impact the patient's care. The treatment may be less effective or, in some cases, dangerous for the patient. Therefore, medical terminology knowledge is crucial for patient safety (Harris, 1854; Andrews, 1928).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to determine the necessity and awareness of Medical Terminology education in the health sector and examine its importance. Terminology allows individuals sharing the same profession to use the same language. Medical terminology facilitates the monitoring of professional publications and effective communication with international colleagues for health professionals. Medical terminology serves various essential purposes for those working in billing, medical coding, and directly with patients (Awaysheh et al., 2018).

In conclusion, Medical Terminology helps patients receive the care and medications they need more quickly. This, in turn, allows health centers to see more patients and increase overall efficiency. Additionally, since doctors, nurses, and other health sector employees often deal with many patients, treatment team meetings involving multiple providers are common in hospitals (Rice, 2016; Stanfield et al., 2015). Therefore, all members of the patient's treatment team can communicate more easily using the same universal medical terminology to update patient information and discuss treatment plan changes.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, F.H.Y. methodology, F.H.Y, M.S.S.F; formal analysis, F.H.Y, M.S.S.F.; investigation, F.H.Y.; data curation, F.H.Y, M.S.S.F.; writing—original draft preparation, F.H.Y, M.S.S.F; writing—review and editing, F.H.Y, M.S.S.F

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