



Medical Meanings: A Glossary of Word Origins

Revised and expanded. William S. Haubrich. 253 pp. Illust. American College of Physicians. 1997. Distributed in Canada by the CMA. \$40.95 (\$32.95, members). ISBN 0-943126-56-8

Overall rating:	Good
Strengths:	Up-to-date, interesting reference
Weaknesses:	Neither comprehensive nor detailed
Audience:	Of general interest to all physicians and libraries

Lovers of our medical language will enjoy this new edition of *Medical Meanings*, written by William Haubrich, a California physician, author and consultant for the *American Heritage Dictionary*. The book lists derivations of medical words and phrases, which frequently make for interesting reading. Haubrich brings humour and interesting background to his explanations.

Although few words from the 1984 edition are revised, many new terms are incorporated, bringing the number of words and roots to over 3000. Newcomers such as "Western Blot" and "adjuvant" are included, along with more disease names and a few abbreviations. A smattering of nonmedical terms are explained (Murphy's Law, zest, pabulum and zyzzyva, to name a few). Even some vulgarities have been added. Etymology being an uncertain science, many derivations are debatable. Medical word lovers might like to take Haubrich up on his offer to write in with contrary opinions or suggested entries.

As befits a glossary, this book is concise. There are references to seminal articles and some physicians, but little detail. There are almost no medical biographies, unlike previous books in this vein such as *The Origin*

of *Medical Terms* (1949), by H.A. Skinner, or *The Story Behind the Word* (1958), by Harry Wain. The truly curious may look for more in biographical dictionaries or encyclopedias of mythology. Owners of Skinner and Wain will find *Medical Meanings* a good modern complement to these more extensive, older works.

The book is clearly written, with foreign words and letters transformed into English equivalents, and is accessible by any literate person. I found it suitable for casual browsing as well as reference. Medical educators could employ the information to spice up a lecture, and students may find it helpful in the assimilation of their new vocabulary.

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Aujourd'hui, la mort

Serge Bureau. 296 pp. Les Éditions Fides, Montréal (Qué.). 1996. Prix non mentionné. ISBN 2-7621-1914-6

Évaluation générale : Bon

Points forts : Clarté du langage; diversité et richesse des thèmes abordés

Faiblesses : Les entrevues ne sont pas toutes de même qualité

Clientèle : Public cultivé; enrichissant pour les médecins

Longtemps taboue, la mort est devenue un thème à la mode. Publications, cours, rencontres, entretiens radiophoniques se multiplient à son sujet. La médecine n'échappe pas à cette dynamique, comme le montrent les débats sur

l'euthanasie, l'aide médicale au suicide ou les soins palliatifs. Alors même que la médecine tend à nier la mort par des prolongements interminables ou est tentée de mettre un terme à une vie dont la qualité est jugée insatisfaisante, *Aujourd'hui, la mort* ne peut qu'enrichir et humaniser le travail médical dans les situations où des malades et leurs proches font face à la maladie terminale, en rappelant que la mort appartient à l'histoire de la vie.

Ce livre est le résultat d'une série d'entretiens radiophoniques où, pour cerner les visages anciens et modernes de la mort, Serge Bureau a abordé avec une vingtaine d'invités cinq grands thèmes : l'histoire, la réflexion de diverses religions, le contexte contemporain (le rôle du médecin, les soins palliatifs, le suicide, le sida, l'éthique, la thanatologie, le cadre juridique), la philosophie et la métaphysique.

Si les entretiens ne revêtent pas un caractère scientifique, la qualité des invités donne toutefois à l'ensemble du volume un ton de «haute vulgarisation». Malgré une qualité inégale, la lecture demeure intéressante, enrichissante et facilement accessible. Quelques points méritent d'être soulignés. En dépit des progrès technologiques extraordinaires qui paraissent chambouler de nos jours le sens même de la mort, les hommes et les femmes d'aujourd'hui sont habités du même questionnement que ceux et celles d'hier : la mort paraît toujours aussi énigmatique et douloureuse. Des pages importantes sont aussi consacrées au deuil et à ses rituels. De nombreux entretiens abordent la diversité des points de vue, mais aussi la préoccupation commune, de cinq grandes religions (malheureusement, aucun ne porte sur les religions amérindiennes). Saisir le sens qui les anime est de première nécessité pour



un médecin car une religion, en tant qu'expression culturelle, est une extraordinaire porte d'entrée pour rejoindre l'intimité même de la personne malade. Enfin, tout médecin lira avec intérêt les réflexions, à la fois profondes et simples, d'un de leurs confrères sur l'humilité qui doit habiter le médecin devant la mort.

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Ask the Doctor: Breast Cancer

Vincent Friedewald, Aman U. Buzdar, Michael Bokulich. *Ask the Doctor* series. 136 pp. Illust. Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City. 1997. \$12.50. ISBN 0-8362-2710-7

Overall rating:	Excellent
Strengths:	Clearly written; practical; recognizes importance of emotional experience; encourages patient participation in decision-making and information seeking
Weaknesses:	Technical in places; references more pertinent in the US setting
Audience:	Patients, especially those newly diagnosed, and their families

Written specifically for the woman newly diagnosed with breast cancer, *Ask the Doctor: Breast Cancer* is a clear, comprehensive guide. The authors successfully balance their main purposes: to provide complex medical information that will allow patients to participate in treatment decisions and to provide support and practical guidelines for coping.

The book is organized and readable. There are chapters devoted to diagnosis and to each of the major treatment modalities: surgery, radiation, chemotherapy and hormonal

therapy. A special feature is the use of icons in the margins to highlight areas of interest (e.g., diet, heredity, information to discuss with your doctor).

The profound emotional stress experienced by women in this situation is recognized throughout the book. A second theme is the uniqueness of the breast cancer experience for each woman. One of the book's greatest strengths is the chapter "What is breast cancer?" Difficult concepts such as DNA damage and the role of genes in hereditary predisposition to breast cancer are discussed in an understandable fashion. The "It's your turn" sections at the end of each chapter are also useful, challenging readers to answer questions pertinent to their own situation.

"How are you doing?" gives useful advice regarding diet, exercise and coping with the emotional effects of treatment. Specific attention is given to work issues and to discussing the diagnosis with family, friends and colleagues. Another strength of this patient guide is the chapter devoted to the period following treatment completion. The authors recognize this time as one of the two periods of greatest emotional stress faced by patients.

There are some highly technical sections containing information unlikely to be of interest to the average reader. Other weaknesses are references to several chemotherapeutic regimens no longer in common use and the inclusion of sections related to recurrent or metastatic disease in chapters that deal with primary and adjuvant therapies. An unfortunate limitation of the book is that information on support groups and cancer information services is not generally applicable to the Canadian setting.

Despite these weaknesses, *Ask the Doctor: Breast Cancer* can be highly recommended to most patients with breast cancer. It presents the experience and the treatment decision-making process in a positive light. Pa-

tients will benefit from its practical yet compassionate dealing with what is often a difficult and frightening situation.

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On Call Cardiology

M. Gabriel Khan. *On Call Series*. 343 pp. Illust. Harcourt Brace. 1997. \$28.95. ISBN 0-7216-6848-8

Overall rating:	Good
Strengths:	Compact, clear, well organized, some good tables and algorithms
Weaknesses:	Oversimplification; relationship of drugs and severe toxic reactions not explained
Audience:	Interns, 1st-year residents

Khan has attempted a challenging project: to write a book that is small and portable, yet comprehensive in the area of cardiology emergencies. The target audience is the intern or 1st-year resident with little experience in these problems. The book's strengths are the clarity of presentation and the organization of patient-related problems.

The section on physical examination and electrocardiographic analysis is addressed more to a 2nd- or 3rd-year medical student than to an intern or 1st-year resident. If the reader does not have knowledge in both those areas, this section is inadequate. If this section is merely for review, then a much more limited description of physical signs and ECG findings could have been added to each patient problem area.

There are some errors and oversimplifications. For example, it is stated that cough is produced by amiodarone. The more important statement is that cough occurring in a