First Responder Accreditation

Topic 6:

Healthcare-related Terminology

Contents

Introduction

Healthcare terminology is a vocabulary for accurately describing the human body and associated components, conditions, processes and process in a science-based manner. Healthcare terminology is used in the medical, nursing and pre hospital fields.

Healthcare terms

In healthcare terminology there is systematic approach to word building based on the concept of:

- Word roots
- Prefixes
- Suffixes
- Combining vowel

Word roots
Word roots; are derived from a source language such as Greek or Latin and usually describes a body part.

- *cardi* – root for heart
- *hepat* – root for liver
- *neur* – root for nerve
- *nephr* – root for kidney
- *cyt* – root for cell

Prefixes
Prefixes can be added in front of the term to modify the word root by giving additional information about the location of an organ, the number of parts, or time involved.

- *pre* – prefix means before
- *peri* – prefix means around
- *hemi* – prefix means half
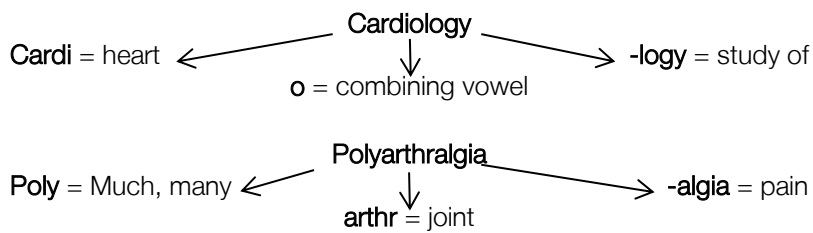- *micro* – prefix means small
- *neo* – prefix means new

Suffixes
Suffixes are attached to the end of a word root to add meaning such as condition, disease process, or procedure.

- *itis* - suffix means inflammation
- *ology* - suffix means the study of
- *ectomy* - suffix means surgical removal
- *plast* - suffix means surgical repair

Combining vowel
Combining vowel is used with the word root to add a "smoothing" to the word root when applying a suffix, the most common vowel used in the formation of the combining form is the letter -o-, added to the word root.

Here are a few examples of how to understand healthcare terms

Cardiology
Cardi = heart ← → **-logy** = study of
o = combining vowel

Polyarthralgia
Poly = Much, many ← → **-algia** = pain
arthr = joint

Healthcare abbreviations

Healthcare abbreviations are used to promote efficiency. There are some risks associated with their use because they may vary from country to country and one acronym can have several meanings.

Here are some examples:

Meaning	Australian Abbreviation	American Abbreviation
Antibiotics	Ab's	ABX
Before a meal	a.c.	a.c or AC
A_x	Assessment	Axillary
R/O	Risk Of	Rule Out

Healthcare Acronyms

Healthcare acronyms are formed with the initial letters of a multi-word name; they can have more than one meaning. It is important to understand the context in which the acronym is used.

Some examples of acronyms with two meaning are as follows:

- **CF**   **C**lear **F**luids – or – **C**ardiac **F**ailure
- **DOA**   **D**rug **O**f **A**ddiction – or – **D**ead **O**n **A**rrival

English healthcare acronyms are written in uppercase, Latin acronyms are written in lower case.
Here are some examples of Latin healthcare acronyms:

- **b.d.**   twice a day (bis die) or **b.i.d** (bis in die)
- **p.c.**   after food (post cibum)
- **p.o**   by mouth (per os)
- **p.r.n.**   as necessary (pro re nata)
- **q**   each, every (quaque)
- **q.i.d.**   four times each day (quarter in die)

Healthcare abbreviations – the X Family
The "x" family are abbreviations that end in a lower case "x" some examples are:

- **B_x**   biopsy
- **D_x**   diagnosis
- **FH_x**   family history
- **I_x**   Investigation
- **P_x**   prognosis
- **PH_x**   past history

- **PMH$_x$**   past healthcare history
- **R$_x$**   prescription or treatment
- **S$_x$**   symptoms, signs or surgery
- **T$_x$**   treatment, transplant or therapy

Healthcare acronyms - exceptions to the rules

From time to time there are some healthcare abbreviations that do not fit any of the normal rules, some examples of these are:

- **Ab**   antibody
- **Ag**   antigen
- **O/E**   on examination
- **XRT**   radiation therapy

Pronouncing healthcare terms

In everyday English the same letter can represent many different sounds; this is also true for healthcare terminology.

The Word Part	Pronunciation	Example
ae	ee	paediatrics *pee-de-at-riks*
aer	air	aerobe *air-robe*
oe	ee	hepatorrhoea *hep-ah-toh-ree-ah*
pn	n	Pneumonia *new-moh-nee-ah*
ps	s	psychologist *sy-kol-o-gist*

Systems of the Body

As a first aider, it is important to have an understanding of the basic systems in the body. This does not mean that you have to know the names of every bone, muscle or blood vessel in the body. However, it is important to be able to use the names of key components of the body.

You should now read *Australian First Aid* Chapter 26 which provides an appropriate introduction to the systems of the human body. As you read through the chapter, make a list of the key terms used and refer to the glossary at the end of this topic for an explanation where necessary.

Location, Position and Motion Terms

When indicating the location of an injury on a casualty, the point of reference is the casualty not the examiner. For example, (L) indicates the left side of the casualty not your left side.

When you are describing the **casualty's position**, the following terms may be used:

- *erect* = standing upright
- *supine* = lying face up
- *prone* = lying face down
- *lateral* = lying on the side
- *semi-recumbent* = ½ lying
- *semi-prone* = ½ prone
- *substernal* = under
- *diameter* = across

When **describing motion**, the following terms may be used:

- *flexion* = act of bending or being bent
- *extension* = 'in contrast to extending'
- *abduction* = draw away from the median plane of the body
- *adduction* = draw towards the median
- *rotation* = process of turning on an axis