

Module 6

Common Medical Terms

- The following English medical terms are often used in medical phrases (e.g. "acute otitis")

Term	Definition
acute	sharp; severe; occurring rapidly
benign	non-malignant
chronic	of long duration
malignant	harmful; resisting treatment [of cancers]
subacute	developing at a moderate rate

Anatomical Roots: The Respiratory System

- *halit-*
 - *hal-* is also the origin of "inhale" and "exhale"
 - *halitosis* means "bad breath"
- *phren-, phrenic-*
 - Greek: *phren* = "one of the organs in the thoracic cavity the Greeks thought was an element of cognition and emotion"
 - *phren* (pl. *phrenes*) retained both associations with the thoracic cavity and with cognition and emotion
- *pne-, pneum-, pneumat-, pneum-, pneumon-, pulm-, pulmon-*
 - *pne-*
 - Shortest root of the group
 - *pneum-, pneumat-*
 - Greek: *pneuma* = "wind, air, or breath"
 - *pneum-, pneumon-, pulm-, pulmon-*

- Greek: *pneumon* = "lung"
- Latin: *pulmo, pulmonis* = "lung"
- Note that *pneum-* can mean both air/gases as well as lung
- *sin-, sinu-, sinus-*
 - Latin: *sinus* = "any kind of fold"
- *trache-*
 - Greek: *trachus* = "rough"
 - Trachea is lined with corrugated, cartilaginous ridges

Substance Roots

- *acet-*
 - Latin: *acetum* = "sour wine i.e. vinegar"
 - Acetic acid, found in vinegar, was the earliest known acid
- *myx-, muc- vs myc-, mycet-*
 - Roots for "mucus" and "fungus"
 - Latin: *mucus* = "mucus"
 - *muc-* is the only Latin root, the rest are Greek
- *chol-, chole-, bili-*
 - Greek: *chol-, chole-* comes from "bile" or "anger"
 - Latin: *bili-* comes from "bile" or "anger"
 - In English, "bilious" is both the uncomfortable presence of bile in the throat as well as metaphorically bad tempered
 - The substance in the gall bladder is "bile" for humans, "gall" for animals
- *galact-, lact-*
 - Greek: *gala, galactos* = "milk"
 - Greeks thought the night sky galaxy looked like spilled milk
- *kerat-, cerat-, cornu-, corne-*

- For non-ophthalmological contexts, these roots describe any type of horn or something that is hard or curved like a horn
- *lith-, -lith*
 - [location of stone] + lith + termination (often -ectomy/ectomize/tomy) "incision into the [location] to remove a stone"
 - [location of stone] + lith "a stone in the kidney"
 - [location of stone] + lith + -iasis "the prescence/formation of a stone in [location]"
- *pharmac-*
 - Greek: *pharmakon* = "medicinal drug or poison"
 - Ancient Greek and Roman physicians had to carefully administer medicinal plants because if the patient died, they accusations of poisoning would often be the result even if they died of other causes; these were difficult to disprove and could ruin a healer's reputation or lead to criminal charges