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Topic 1

In this topic you will learn about:

1A Interpreting and documenting instructions

1B Understanding basic components of medical terminology

Interpret instructions containing medical terminology

Health information is constantly shared and exchanged amongst health professionals.

People working in the health sector use a known list of medical terms and abbreviations with the knowledge that others working in the field will be able to correctly interpret what is communicated. This ensures consistency in what is communicated across the industry. Health information must never be ambiguous or open to interpretation; a patient's health may be placed at risk when instructions or information is unclear or changed by mistake.

Like learning a new language, learning a full list of medical terminology becomes easier with practice. As you immerse yourself in it, you will become more proficient. You will soon learn the value of using abbreviations and medical terminology in the communications you carry out as part of your job. This will save you time and increase your productivity. You will find yourself incorporating medical terms and abbreviations into your language when speaking to others, and when writing and producing documents as part of your everyday routine tasks.

Common medical prefixes

Prefixes are word parts that come before the root or roots used in a word.

Prefixes are generally used to convey the following meanings:

▶ Quantity – numbers, metric measurement
Example: 'tri' meaning three, as in triceps muscle

▶ Negatives – not, without, against
Example: 'anti' meaning against, as in antibiotic

▶ Degree, size and comparison – big/small, fast/slow
Example: 'mega' meaning big, as in megacolon and 'micro' meaning small, as in microscopic

▶ Time, position and direction – above/below, before/after
Example: 'ante' meaning before, as in antenatal and 'post' meaning after, as in postnatal.

Here are some examples of prefixes found in medical terms.

Prefix	Meaning	Prefix	Meaning
Ab-	Away from	Hypo-	Under, deficient
Ad-	Towards	Hydro-	Water
Ante-	Before, forward	Homeo-	Stability, same
Anti-	Against	Inter-	Between, among
Brady-	Slow	Intra-	Within, on the side
Circum-	Surrounding	Macro-	Large
Contra-	Against	Neo-	New
Cry-	Cold	Para-	Beside
Di-	Double, two	Peri-	Around
Dys-	Difficult, defective	Post-	After
Ect-	Outside	Pre-	Before, in front of
End-	Inside	Semi-	Half
Epi-	On	Stom- Stomat-	Opening created
Glyc-	Sugar	Sub-	Under, beneath
Fore-	Before or ahead	Super-	Above, over
Hemi-	One half	Supra-	Above, on the upper side
Hyper-	Over, excessive	Syn-	With, together

Suffix	Meaning		Suffix	Meaning
-oma	Tumor		-rupt	Break or burst
-pathy	Disease		-scler	Hardening
-phagia	Eating, swallowing		-scope	Instrument for examination
-phobia	Fear		-stalsis	Contraction
-phili(ia)	Attraction to		-stenosis	Abnormal narrowing
-plasty	Plastic surgery		-stomy	Creating an opening
-plegia	Paralysis		-tic	Pertaining to
-poiesis	Production		-tomy	Incision
-rrheoea	Flowing, discharge		-ula -ule	Small

Word roots used in medical terms

Word roots provide the basic meaning of a word.

Word roots can be found on their own or added to another word root to form a new word. A prefix or suffix can be added to a word root to change the meaning of the word. For example, the prefix 'para', meaning beside, can be added to the word root 'thyroid'. It changes the meaning of the word to 'beside the thyroid'.

Word roots are generally used to convey the following meanings:

▶ Body structures or anatomy – the cells, tissues, glands, organs, cavities and regions of the body
   Example: 'pneumon' meaning lung, as in pneumonia

▶ Body fluids – blood, sweat, tears, saliva, mucus, pus, bile, urine, etc.
   Example: 'sial' meaning saliva, as in sialogram

▶ Chemical compounds – substances such as sugar, protein, fat, oxygen, poison and drugs
   Example: 'gluc' meaning sugar, as in glucose

▶ Physical factors – temperature, light, sound, electricity, radiation
   Example: 'therm' meaning heat, as in thermometer

▶ Agents of infection – bacteria, viruses, fungi
   Example: 'myc' meaning fungus, as in mycosis

▶ Colours
   Example: 'leuk' meaning white, as in leukaemia

Here are some common word root examples used in medical terms. The meanings of the words have been provided.

Eponyms may be used to name diseases and disorders, symptoms and signs, parts of the body, medical tests, surgical procedures, pieces of equipment, bacteria and viruses. They are perhaps the most difficult group of words to spell because there are no rules governing the spelling of names and many are foreign names.

Other common examples include Alzheimer's disease and Pap smear. Alzheimer's disease was named after Alois Alzheimer (1864—1915), a German neurologist, who first described the disease in 1906. Alzheimer's is an incurable degenerative disease of the brain. The Pap smear was named after George Papanicolaou (1883—1962), an American physician of Greek ancestry. This procedure is a test for the early detection of cancer of the cervix.

Practice task 2

Question 1

Match each prefix on the left to its definition on the right.

* Peri-	* Before, forward
* Dys-	* Slow
* Neo-	* Surrounding
* Brady-	* Difficult or defective
* Inter-	* One half
* Hemi-	* Under-active
* Ultra-	* Between
* Circum-	* New
* Sub-	* Around
* Ante-	* Below
* Hyp-	* Across
* Trans-	* Excessive

2A Responding to workplace requirements

Policies and procedures ensure the correct, safe and legal delivery of services to patients.

Policies outline the course of action employees must follow. The instructions you receive and your actions at work should be underpinned by these requirements. Procedures are the specific methods or procedures you must follow in your daily routines and will reflect organisational policies.

Policies and procedures form part of the registration and regulatory requirements for many health services. These regulations apply to all medical and health services, such as hospitals, community health settings, and privately owned and run practices, including patient's homes and residential care homes. Organisational policies and procedures are often explained during an induction and form part of the service's staff handbook. A written job description may also outline relevant policies and procedures you need to follow to perform your job safely and efficiently.

Health and safety policies and procedures

Work health and safety (WHS) policies and procedures ensure the health of patients and workers.

WHS covers many aspects of the work environment. Infection control and manual lifting are particularly important aspects of WHS if you work in the health industry. This is because anyone working in the health industry is likely to be in contact with people who are unwell. There is also a higher risk of musculoskeletal injury by lifting or moving heavy objects (including patients) incorrectly.

The instructions provided in procedural documents need to be carried out accurately if risk to workers is to be reduced. If procedures contain medical terms or abbreviations, you must be able to interpret them correctly. For example, a hand-washing procedure will outline how and when hand washing should occur so standards of hygiene are maintained and cross-infection is prevented. Your employer may also require that protective clothing such as gloves and aprons be worn when performing some tasks. Training can be provided to ensure that medical terms and procedures are understood and followed.

Example

Client history form template

Therapeutic Massage Clinic
18 Worbly Road, Botham

07 3248 1245

Date:

Name of practitioner:

Personal information

Full name:

Address:

DOB:

Contact number:

Billing information:

Occupation:

Emergency contact
details (including NOK):

Health information:

Presenting condition:

Medical history:

Current level of exercise:

Active/passive ROM test results:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Communication should be adjusted according to:

▶ the audience's level of expertise or knowledge, such as a patient, a supervisor, a colleague or another health specialist

▶ previous interactions and experience with services, such as patients who have been attending the healthcare service for some time

▶ the person's age; for example, children and adolescents may need to have an adult present to communicate on their behalf

▶ cultural sensitivities, such as persons identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who may want some information shared with other family members

▶ physical abilities, such as difficulties hearing, reading or writing

▶ level of English language skills, such as a patient requiring information in a language other than English

▶ health conditions that can interfere with comprehension and concentration, such as acquired brain injury, mental health issues or effects of an alcohol or drug addiction.

Communicating with patients

Every patient has the right to ask questions to clarify their understanding about their health.

The number of interactions you have with patients will vary across the working day. You may be involved in greeting patients and helping them feel relaxed, providing information about a procedure or asking questions to obtain information. These communications may require you to use certain medical terminology.

The aim of effective communication is to ensure the correct message is received. When you are speaking with patients, difficult medical words may confuse them and jargon or complex medical terms should be avoided. You may offer to read an instruction out loud or explain a written document so the person is able to fully understand the information you are giving them. This is particularly important when obtaining consent from a patient to receive a health or medical treatment.

Purpose of communicating	Explanation	Type of communication
To collect information for an appointment	You may be the first interaction with a potential new patient. The information you collect may include health information or more detailed questions that are important for determining the treatment they require. You may also need to provide information on fees and payment requirements.	Oral and written
To document medical history or information	These important records include accurately documented information on the person's medical history, including health conditions.	Oral and written

Summary

- ▶ Policies and procedures provide a framework for the behavior and actions of staff so operations are conducted legally and efficiently.

- ▶ As a new employee, you may wish to do your own study to learn the terms you are required to use at work, such as in textbooks or online medical dictionaries.

- ▶ Patients have the right to receive health information that is clearly communicated and to ask questions to clarify their understanding.

- ▶ Communication flow within an organisation and between health workers is important for the effective provision of services and care.

- ▶ Documents will have different purposes and be directed at different audiences, such as a patient, a colleague or your supervisor. Each of these documents may require a different style of writing.

- ▶ Misspelling causes confusion and mistakes, which can lead to inappropriate care or risks to health and safety.

- ▶ When exchanging information with others, ensure you use the correct pronunciation.