Relevance of English as an International Language of Medicine

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Is English for Medical Purposes (EMP) important in your future career?
Why yes / why not?
English is...

“...by far the most used language in international medical meetings [as well as] the main medium for medical textbooks, journals, and abstracting indexes, ...”

(Maher 1986, Applied Linguistics)
“...in the second half of the twentieth century English emerged as the predominant *lingua franca* in medicine.”

(Maclean and Maher 1994, *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*)
“English has steadily replaced other languages in research literature and has become the lingua franca of the international science community.”

(Flowerdew, 1999a, 1999b cited by Mišak, Marušić, M., Marušić, A., 2005)
lingua franca, noun

a language which is used for communication between groups of people who speak different languages but which is not used between members of the same group

Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary
Competence in English

Professional requirement

Working environment

Academic career
Importance of EL proficiency for the medical scene

- Continuing medical education (CME) / Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

“Continuing medical education (CME) can be defined as educational activities which serve to maintain, develop or increase the knowledge, skills and professional performance and relationships that a physician uses to provide services for patients, the public, or the profession.”

(EACCME)
Importance of EL proficiency for the medical scene

- Medical conferences
  - e.g. EACCME – the central body for accrediting events in Europe
  - in 2010 - **1030 events** in more than 40 medical specialties

- EACCME → UEMS → CMA

Croatian Medical Association
Importance of EL proficiency for the medical scene

- Medical journals
  - reading
  - writing
Importance of EL proficiency for the medical scene

READING

➢ EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE

the practice of medicine in which the physician finds, assesses, and implements methods of diagnosis and treatment on the basis of the best available, current research, their clinical expertise, and the needs and preferences of the patient.

Dorland's Medical Dictionary
Importance of EL proficiency for the medical scene

WRITING

- researchers – “publish or perish” approach
- clinicians – work accessible to the global community

Importance of EL proficiency for the medical scene

- Exams: PLAB, USMLE
  - Professional and Linguistics Assessment Board
    - PLAB Part 1 and 2
    - IELTS scores (7.0)
  - United States Medical Licensing Examination
    - STEPS 1, 2, 3
    - STEP 2 - Integrated Clinical Encounter
      - Communication and Interpersonal Skills
      - Spoken English Proficiency
Importance of EL proficiency for the medical scene

- Medical encounters with native and non-native English-speaking patients
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROCEDURE</th>
<th>CRO</th>
<th>GER</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hip replacement</td>
<td>6.300</td>
<td>14.000</td>
<td>24.200</td>
<td>30.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knee replacement</td>
<td>6.200</td>
<td>12.300</td>
<td>15.400</td>
<td>30.000</td>
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Medical history

The Greek Era

- Hippocratic writings:
  - cover all aspects of medicine
  - numerous medical terms

- the Romans imported Greek medicine

- names of diseases and symptoms derive from Greek e.g. diarrhoea (throughflow) dyspnoea (bad breathing)
Medical history

- Middle Ages – Greek medical texts were translated into Arabic

- at the time of the renaissance – Greek and Arabic works were translated into Latin

- all important medical works were published in Latin
Medical history

➤ National Medical Languages

- medical English, medical French, medical German, medical Italian etc.

- they had much in common – medical terms were derived from medical Latin

- there were also systematic differences that still persist
Medical history

- Medical English
  - medical journals, international conferences in English
  - the era of medical English - a single language for international communication
  - register of medical terms today– composed of words borrowed from ordinary English
    e.g. bypass operation
    screening
    scanning
Medical history

- English-speaking doctors accept direct loans with Latin endings
  - e.g. *medulla oblongata*
  - *diabetes mellitus*

- Medical scientists coined a number of new terms composed of Greek roots
  - e.g. *ophtalmoscopy*
  - *erythrocyte*

- 90% of the medical terminology today – derive from Greek and Latin
Communication skills training

- breaking bad news
- giving results
- dealing with sensitive issues
- receiving a patient
- examining a patient
Useful links

- [www.onelook.com](http://www.onelook.com) – online dictionaries
- [www.medscape.com](http://www.medscape.com) – medical news, full-text journal articles and more
- [www.medline.com](http://www.medline.com)
- [http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/)