LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Doctor-Speak

Dear Editor,

So often now, when a word is heard,
A medical homonym springs to mind.
So, crashing is bad, but not “two cars colliding”,
And sympathetic nerves aren’t “compassionate and kind”.

An arrest is rarely a policeman’s duty;
Theatres are the site of operations, not plays.
No-one takes a sail in what we call a vessel,
And a PET is not a puppy but a fancy-scan X-ray.

An iris is not a pretty flower, but gives the eyeball colour;
And a pigtail not a hairstyle, but a surgical drain.
A pile is often nastier than meaning “heap” implies,
And the palate isn’t covered with an artist’s paint.

A ward has beds for patients, it’s not a protégé to watch;
A gag is not a prank, but a reflex of the throat.
Veins not narcissistic but it carries blue-tinged blood;
As tone denotes stiffness, not a musical note.

The eye sits in its orbit, which is not a planet’s route;
Actors on a stage have nought to do with tubule casts.
Blasts are early cells, not violent explosions;
Inflation’s what the lungs do, not prices higher than in past.

CABG is not a vegetable, it leaves a chest-long scar;
Hip is not just cool, it’s a well-known body part.
Tachy is not tawdry, but a heart that beats too fast,
And a murmur’s not a mumble, but a problem with that heart.

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To write a *script* means chart some meds, and not a full-scale drama;
A *shock* can help a heart that’s stopped, it’s not a bad surprise.
A *joint* is not illegal, but allows our limbs to move;
*Pupils* are not students but the opening to our eyes.

*PEARL* is yes, desirable, but ain’t an oyster’s gem,
And when the eyes *accommodate*, they won’t house nought but light.
I *admit* and take a patient, not acknowledge any guilt;
A *mole*, brown naevus on the skin, is not a creature of the night.

A *screen* is not a partition, it’s a check-up on one’s health;
A *tic* is not an insect, but a twitching, say of face.
*Stable* means “he’s doing fine”, not “living with a horse”;
*Rash* denotes a skin problem, not something done in haste.

A *tissue* is not a handkerchief, but skin and fat and more;
A *trunk* then is one’s torso, not a suitcase for vacation;
To *group* now means to blood-type, more oft than form a gang;
And *graft*, once just hard work, is a kind of transplantation.

So while we learn the science too, I hope you will agree,
That given how our language skills grow exponentially,
As we graduate from Med School, bestowed with MB or MD,
For learning this new language, we should earn a Doctor-Speak degree!

Yours sincerely,

Danielle Ní Chróinín