

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.
Vein’s 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