

J is for jargon, specifically medical jargon. Health professionals routinely use a variety of terms and abbreviations to rapidly and succinctly record information into the medical record. A big part of medicine is learning to speak the language. Here are a few examples.

Abduction – to move a limb away from the midline of the body

Acidotic – abnormally high acidity of body fluids and tissues

Agonal – A major, negative change in a patient's condition

ALOC – acute loss of consciousness

Anuric – not producing urine

Arrhythmia – heart rhythm is abnormal; no rhythm

Asystole – heart no longer beats

Bandemia – elevated level of band forms of white blood cells (left shift)

Bibasilar – at the bases of both lungs

Bolus – large dose of drug or fluids (usually given intravenously) at the beginning of treatment to raise blood-level concentrations to a therapeutic level

Bradycardia – slow heart rate less than 50 beats per minute

Capillary refill – when a fingernail is pressed it turns white. The return of blood flow to the nail turns the fingernail pink and usually occurs in 2 seconds or less

Claudication – limping or leg pain caused by impaired blood flow to the legs

Debridement – cleaning an open wound by removing foreign material and dead tissue

Decerebration – progressive loss of cerebral function which occurs due to severe damage to the cerebrum of the brain

Diaphoresis – sweating

Dyspnea – shortness of breath

Embolus – blood clot

Fetal distress – a number of critical conditions threatening the live delivery of a fetus

FHT – fetal heart tone

Fibrillation – uncoordinated or quivering heart muscle

GI cocktail – Commonly used mixture of Donnatal (stops gastrointestinal spasms) viscous lidocaine (stops pain) and Mylanta (anti-acid)

Hemiparesis – paralysis or weakness on one side of the body

Hyper – too much

Hypo – too low

Infarction – tissue death due to lack of oxygen or hypoxia

Laparotomy – any surgery involving an incision in the abdominal wall

Melana – black tarry stools due to bleeding in the gastrointestinal system

Necrotic – dead as in “necrotic tissue”

NPO – nothing by mouth

Pedal – related to the foot

Pleura – lining around the lung

Pulsatile – beating, as in a pulsatile mass

Sed rate – erythrocyte sedimentation rate – a red blood cell count used to determine inflammation

Stasis – slowing or stopping of blood flow

Stridor – what breathing sounds like when the larynx or trachea is obstructed

Tension pneumothorax – a collapsed lung