

Enmeshed in Metaphor

The Scientific, Philosophical, and Satirical
Essays of Samuel Vaisrub, MD

Alan Blum, MD
University of Alabama

Creating Space IX: April 12th - 13th, 2019 McMaster University

The Manitoba Medical Review (February 1955)	
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Editorial and Business Offices: 604 Medical Arts Building, Winnipeg	Business Manager
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Every Doctor. The Editor will be pleased to consider any form of news sent to his members.	
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Manitoba Medical Review
Editorial and Business Offices: 604 Medical Arts Building, Winnipeg

Editor

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The Manitoba Medical Review is published first of each month, in the first week of February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, and December. Manuscripts should be sent to the Editor at least two weeks before the date of publication. The Review is published by the Manitoba Medical Association. Closing date for the preceding issue is the 15th of the month preceding the month of publication.

The Manitoba Medical Review (March 1955)	
Association Page	
Reported by M. T. Macdonald, M.D.	
Editorial	
Dr. S. Vaisrub	
Appointed Senior Editor	
Samuel Vaisrub, the newly appointed Editor, was graduated in Medicine, University of Toronto, 1911. Following general practice in rural Saskatchewan he served with the Royal Canadian Air Force Medical Corps in Italy and North Africa. He took post graduate training in England and on arrival wrote the constitution and organized the B.M.C.P. of London, later to become a F.R.C.P. In 1941, Dr. Vaisrub was successful in securing the position of representative in the Medical Division of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. He is a Lecturer in Medicine at the University of Manitoba, a member of staff of St. Boniface and Dufferin Hospitals.	
Dr. Vaisrub has displayed a keen interest in medical history and has contributed various articles to Canadian medical journals. His interest in medical history is well known to members of Dufferin Hospital. The Review and the newly appointed Editor express the sympathetic cooperation of the profession.	
Acting President	
The resignation of Dr. R. W. Whiston shortly after his election to office at the Annual Meeting posed a problem for the Executive Committee. The Committee met on the 15th of February and Dr. Vaisrub was elected to the position of Acting President. It was decided that a vacancy in the Executive Committee may be filled by the latter body, but it was not considered that the power extended to those officers who are specifically elected at the Annual Meeting by the membership at large.	
The matter was referred to the First Vice-President, Dr. R. Lyons, who suggested that Dr. Vaisrub, and an addition was made to fill the vacancy for the year ending 1955.	
Resolutions to Board of Trustees	
Manitoba Medical Review	
As a result of the meeting which was held during the month following the Annual Meeting in October, 1954, the following across medical matters were referred for consideration to the Board of Trustees, Manitoba Medical Review for a three-year period 1955-57. Dr. S. A. Birt, A. E. Chisholm, M.D., R. T. Macdonald, M.D., J. Gordon Wilson, M.D., L.M.C.C., Publicity, R. Lyons, B.A., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., M.R.C.O.G., and K. Borthwick-Leslie, Social.	
These members will assume office at the Annual Meeting of the Manitoba Medical Review to be held in March. A vacancy on the Board caused by the resignation of Dr. R. W. Whiston is to be	
Reported by M. T. Macdonald, M.D.	
The Annual Meeting of the Manitoba Medical Association will be held in conjunction with that of the British Medical Association at the Royal York Hotel, Toronto, June 15th-18th, 1955. Both associations have the British Commonwealth Medical Conference.	
The following representatives have been elected from the Manitoba Division: Dr. A. B. Birt, G. T. Galt, J. A. Hames, R. Lyons, M. T. Macdonald, J. McKeown, G. T. Macdonald, R. W. Whiston, L. A. Sigurdson, W. T. Tait.	
The Acting President, Dr. R. Lyons will be the Manitoba representative on the Executive Committee of the British Medical Association in the C.M.A. Meeting, Vancouver, 1955-56. Dr. T. Galt will be the Manitoba representative on the Executive Committee of the British Medical Association in the C.M.A. Meeting, Vancouver, 1955-56. Dr. T. Galt will be the Manitoba representative on the Executive Committee of the British Medical Association in the C.M.A. Meeting, Vancouver, 1955-56. Dr. T. Galt will be the Manitoba representative on the Executive Committee of the British Medical Association in the C.M.A. Meeting, Vancouver, 1955-56.	
Expenses of Executive Committee Members	
For several years a resolution was on the books of the Association that members traveling and attending to attend meetings of the Executive Committee should be reimbursed for out-of-pocket travel expenses. No claim was made, and the matter was recently raised when one of the District Societies suggested that payment to attending members should be made whether or not a statement in submission. The Executive Committee was requested to study the matter and present a report.	
The following members were approved for reimbursement for various items as follows:	
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MEDICAL EDUCATION

The Department of Continuing Medical Education has announced new courses available:

- St. Basil's Hospital, November 13 and 14, 1965—"Surgical Sub-specialties", ENT, Orthopedics, Urology and Gynecology. Guest speakers, Dr. W. H. Leakey, University Hospital, Edmonton.
- St. Basil's Hospital, November 17, 1965—"Symposium on Vascular Disease". Guest speakers, Prof. A. C. Burton, London, Ontario; Dr. Brian Holman, Toronto; Charles Bab, Rochester, N.Y.; I. J. Schultz, Detroit, Mich.; Sheldon Sheng, Rochester, Minn. Course fee: \$18.00
- Rehabilitation Hospital, December 3 and 4, 1965—"Orthopedic, Neurological and Rehabilitation". Guest speakers, Dr. R. P. Jozak, University of Rochester; Austin B. Chinn, Public Health Service, Washington, D.C.; Victor T. Jenson, University of California; Mr. Wm. J. Sharrard, Sheffield University; Douglas L. Ravlin, University of Edinburgh; Dr. Walter J. Trautner, University of California Medical Centre. Course fee: \$28.00
- Psychiatric Institute, December 6-11, 1965—"Psychiatry for Health Officers". Course fee: \$28.00
- Medical College, February 4 and 5, 1966—"Annual Paediatric Symposium". Guest Speakers, Dr. Mary Ellen Avery, Baltimore. Course fee: \$25.00
- Psychiatric Institute, February 14-18, 1966—"Psychiatry for General Practitioners". Course fee: \$25.00
- Medical College, February 25 and 26, 1966—"Trauma III, Fractures". Guest Speaker, Dr. Robert Fulton, Toronto.

... In Recognition

DR. SAMUEL VAISRUB

After many years of intermittent debate with his friends and himself about such a move, Dr. Samuel Vaistrub has calmly embarked on a new career as a Senior Editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Dr. Vaistrub became editor of the *Macintosh Medical Review* in 1954, succeeding Dr. J. C. Hensack and thus maintaining a tradition of erudition and scholarship in this post.

Through all these years he gave more than a full measure of time and energy, and succeeded in producing a journal of which he, and our Association, may be justly proud. Encouraging, persuading, and demanding, he managed to harvest a rich crop of papers from local and visiting contributors. His own editorials were always a source of pleasure to his readers and several were published in journals of national and international circulation. These essays reveal a man of interests ranging from health to health care. At their best the comic sketches may be mentioned along with Perelman, and the word games with Thurber.

Sam was born in Russia and came to Canada as a youth. His father, a Hebrew teacher, provided an silver spoon but a treasury of values and traditions. After serving in the RCMP especially in Italy, he took training in Internal Medicine in England obtaining the MRCP and then set up practice in Winnipeg.

Few physicians have combined so successfully an ability in practice with literary ability. Few persons have so enjoyed an interest and competence in the "two cultures". Within the same conversation he could informally discuss acid base balance and existentialism. His tremendous reading was never paralleled however, and he achieved



JAMA

The Journal of the American Medical Association

editorials

Enmeshed in Metaphor

"The United States," writes Lewis H. Lapham in a recent editorial ("A Nation of Dreamers," *Harper's*, September 1976, p. 4), "is a nation of dreamers, captured by the power of metaphor. Whenever possible the American substitutes the symbol for whatever it is that the symbol represents." Contrary to the popular view of himself as a practical, skeptical materialist eager to possess material goods, the American, so maintains Lapham, is a dreamer to whom material acquisitions serve as symbols of some desired immortality. The latter is manifest in the surreal atmosphere of the modern novel, in the abstract theories of modern art, in the symbolism of political and business rhetoric, and even in the approaches to sex, where acquisition of the sexual object serves as proof of something else. "The transcendentalism of the American mind," says Lapham, "can turn the whole world into metaphor."

Does this "world" include medicine? Does the American mind also convert medicine into metaphor? Lapham does not raise this question. More's the pity. He missed an opportunity of spotlighting a realm uniquely suited to such transformation. Medicine and its concerns—body and mind, health and disease—have long served as metaphors of good and evil, plague, smallpox, tuberculosis, syphilis, and cancer are more than diseases. They are symbols of dread. The plague was portrayed by medieval artists as a haggard woman running amok in the market.

Medicine itself has acquired a metaphoric significance. To Iona Fabi (*Medical News*), it represents technology, dehumanization, inhumanity, and other soul-debasing attributes of industrial society. By contrast, to the perceptive physician, medicine is a metaphor of great possibilities, a dream of unimpaired triumphs. Lapham's "nation of dreamers" can do worse than share this dream.

Samuel Vaistrub, MD

Improving the Effectiveness of Therapy

The article by A. M. Goepfert, Jr., et al. (p. 1212) describes the failure of patients to comply with a prescribed diet unless they were repeatedly counseled and instructed by a physician and a dietician. This is a specific example of a larger, general problem, patient compliance in all areas of medical treatment. The physician may prescribe diet, medication, exercise, abstinence, and modification of life style, but if the instructions are not followed, the treatment stands no chance of success.

This is where the art of medicine must complement the science of medicine. It is not sufficient to establish the correct diagnosis, e.g., type IV hyperlipoproteinemia, or to be cognizant of the prognosis without treatment. Nor does prescribing appropriate drugs and diet constitute wholly adequate treatment. The diagnosis and subsequent counseling are part of a complete treat-

ARCHIVES

INTERNAL MEDICINE

Samuel Vaistrub, MD

Director, Editor, "Amateur"

Dr. Vaistrub was the distinguished associate editor of the *Archives of Internal Medicine* in 1976. The commentary by Dr. Bush is a reminder of the Vaistrub's superb sense of humor and his unique insight as an editor.

proficiency, industriousness—these are the qualities that transformed him into editor." Vaistrub's reading and observing were indeed perceptive, ranging from the Talmud to *TIME*, from Plato to *Playboy*. Were it not for the keen eye of John Talbot, editor-in-chief of *JAMA* from 1959 to 1968, Vaistrub would have gone on writing his monthly editorial and editing the *Macintosh Medical Review*, which might well have attained a cult status for editorial excellence akin to that of E. P. Searcy's *Bulletin of the Calgary Clinic Association*. "What struck me were two unselected manuscripts he sent us and which of course we published," Talbot relates. "We were always on the lookout for talent, and I knew that this was somebody I wanted to meet" (personal communication, 1981).

Vaistrub accepted the offer to join the staff of *JAMA* without hesitation. After 30 years of clinical practice and a decade as an avocational editor, full-time editing at age 59 would be a second career. As an editorialist, Vaistrub proved to be a thorough and serious writer—but also, at times, mischievous and irreverent. All too aware that a medical editorial is "the most fertile field for the proliferation of cliché," he avoided dogma, polemic, pontification, and similar occupational hazards. Expressing his frustration over the ingrained medical jargon that hinders communication with both patients and colleagues, he proposed a new discipline of "declassification." "Vaistrub also quickly realized that an editorial in *JAMA* is less a statement of the editor's opinion or an instant reaction to a controversial issue than a considered, meditative experience for the author—and some substantial foot for

thought for the reader. Accordingly, Vaistrub's editorials were as timeless as they were timely and remain as informative and enlightening as on the day they were published. When asked how he went about choosing an editorial theme, he responded, "You have to hang it on something like you hang a coat on a nail. You have to make sure it's not a fly on the wall. Editorializing is a blend of art and science—and a bit of literary and gimcrackery and weight of hand. It is also highly personal. Your science derives from textbooks, journals, the whole knowledge you have acquired, superimposed on your own base of knowledge."

Undaunted by the title of senior editor, Vaistrub did not abdicate his engaging sense of humor. Flaming over a bit of his editorialist, it might even be said that he had trouble keeping a "straight phrase." "The Revolutionary Struggle" is a description of a report in a Chinese medical journal by engineers who attributed the success of an operation to the thoughts of Chairman Mao. "Hollow Throat of Metabolism" (see the Leach-Nyhan syndrome), "Proliferation of Error" (on diseases made in the course of research, inspired by the wrong reasons), "Faint for

R.C.A.M.C.

Regimental No. OFFICER, Rank,

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Name **YASHER, S.**

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Country of Residence, Birthplace, Visitation, Canadian, Foreign, etc.:

	Rank	Effective Date	Unit	Place	Activity	
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Text of his verified att. REP. KYRING YASHER (author) Metlock Court, W.P.M.C.						36 6 Sept 43
Proceeded on Post Graduate Refresher Course & atts to 15 Oct 43 Hosp for all purposes						37 2 Sept 44
24 Oct 43 (Calif.) on Rehabilitation Italy						23 19 Mar 45
Granted Prison						23 19 Mar 45
S.O.S. to I-3 List HOME						26 24 Mar 45
T.O.S. No.10 District Detmt from the Canadian Army Overseas						184 30 Oct 45
Attached the railons to Fort Roberts Barracks Officers Mess						30 Oct 45
Insured 30 days disembarkation leave and ration allowance (from 20 Oct 45 to 24 Nov 45)						184 30 Oct 45
Granted lodging allowance						203 28 Nov 45
Granted subsistence allowance						203 28 Nov 45
S.O.S. No.10 District Detmt on retirement (Rehabilitation) Granted \$100.00 clothing allowance and rehabilitation grant						254 4 Dec 45
Address on retirement, 310 Belmont Ave., WINDSOR - Windsor						2 4 Jan 46
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From: Museum Curator <museum@syathconax.ca>

Sent: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 4:18 PM

Sent: Tuesday,
To: Blum, Alan

Subject: LdSH/RCI Museum Contact

Dr. Blum,

Just thought I would pass that service sheet along to you as discussed. An odd piece of serendipity happened right after we got off the phone. Our archives researcher came in with some of our Mella River soldier biographies and one of them had written "Captain 'Sammy' Valbrun" in the margins of her notes. It turns out our Doctor was at Mella River in 1944 and tended to the wounded of the battle in addition to being at X-3 (X-Ray 3, the medical collection point.) Additionally, he was written into our Regimental history quite favourably and I have included a copy of that passage as well [bottom of page 68] to help you in your research. That line comes from "A Record of Achievement" by J.M. McAvity. These books are becoming quite rare, but I'd be happy to lend you a copy if you wish to see one in Calgary.

Caption 1 Copyright P. J. D. (Phd) Webster

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LARRY STRATHMORE'S HORSE (B.C.)

brewed tea and wondered "What now?" as they listened to the fire-fight on the far bank of the Mella. Each could hear the conversations on the radio, each knew that, although ordered to come back, "Perky" had persuaded the Colonel to let him stay on.

During the battle in the Arakan, it had not been possible to obtain any artillery support, apparently because some of the F.O.G.s had let their tanks knocked out while others found themselves out of range of their guns. Lieutenant Perkin had been calling for fire consistently, but all in vain until, at dusk, both Southerton came upon a F.O.G. tank who said that, although he had only one wireless set working, it was needed to a battery of guns that were in range—and he was most anxious to assist. This was Captain Bob Martin of 164th Field Battery, Royal Artillery, a unit equipped with jeep-driven 75 mm. guns. Southerton pointed his scout car beside Martin's tank and relayed messages from the tank to the F.O.G.s, who were firing over 200 rounds of effective high explosive shells into the Japanese positions. The destruction of the guns was brought down during the night. On the conclusion of the C.O.D. Campaign Martin was awarded the M.C. for this action.

Although the night that followed was dark, the British were confident it was one that will never be forgotten by those who were on the beach of the Mella. The destroyed tanks continued to blast as shells, mortar, and Spandau fire kept up incessantly until dawn. Despite fatigue, it was not easy to get sleep because of the tension and excitement, especially for those on the far bank in view of the constant fire of a counter-attack. Although the heavy snail smoke around the bridgedressed several times did not stay so much as anticipated. At first light, the Westminsters captured a house on the far bank, but the British were not sure they had been forced to abandon during the night. At 6:00 hours, the British. Perkins was once again ordered to retire, but once again he persuaded the Colonel to permit his troop to stay on the far side. They came back finally at 1215, after suppressing an attack by the Irish Regiment and

Throughout the operation our irrepressible Medical Officer, Captain "Sammy" Valabur, had worked like a Trojan, had rendered service far beyond the call of duty, with his stoic-hearted assistant, Sergeant "Scotty" Adams, he endeavored himself to all who saw the calm efficiency of his Regimental Aid Post. Following up the Caure Line, he had handled casualties from several units in addition to our own. When the heavy fighting took place near the river, he settled in a farm-house about 600 yards south of "BENEDICTINE" and there he cared for upwards of 100 wounded within a 24-hour period. Our own casualties from this

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THE CROSSING OF THE MULES

grim afternoon totalled two officers killed and six wounded, 18 other soldiers killed and one who died of wounds, and twenty-eight wounded.

[illegible]

The magnitude of the battle is indicated by the record of equipment captured and destroyed: seven PANTHERS, four Mark IV tanks, nine self-propelled guns, five anti-tank guns, one field gun, five submachineguns, four multi-barrelled AA guns, twenty-one motor vehicles, three motorcycles, twenty-two prisoners of war and thirty-six German dead actually counted. Our losses in Sherman tanks totalled seventeen, one in Regimental H.Q., nine in "A" Squadron and seven in "C" Squadron.

By the bold use of tanks in terrain that was entirely unsuitable, the enemy had been caught off balance, had suffered casualties that he could ill afford, and had been denied the use of the Mella as a defensive line to cover his withdrawal to Rome. The bridgehead seized by the Recce Troop, and expanded and held by the Westminster with their support, has been officially recognized as a vital factor in the success of the Allied

led

Throughout the operation our irrepressible Medical Officer, Captain "Sammy" Vaisrub, had worked like a Trojan, had rendered service far beyond the call of duty; with his stout-hearted assistant, Sergeant "Scotty" Adams, he endeared himself to all who saw the calm efficiency of his Regimental Aid Post. Following up the Centre Line, he had handled casualties from several units in addition to our own. When the heavy fighting took place near the river, he settled in a farm-house about 600 yards short of "BENEDICTINE" and there he cared for upwards of 100 wounded within a 24-hour period.

From: Pg. 68 "Crossing the Melfa"

A Record of Achievement A regimental History of Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians)

NUMBER	RANK	NAME	AWARD	0
	Major	G.L. Symmes	D.S.O.	
	"	G.V.H. Watford	" & M.O.	
	A/Capt.	E.J. Perkins	" & M.O.	
	Capt.	S. Valdeus	M.D.R.	
	Lt.	A.M. Mackinnon	M.O.	
	Lt.	D.P. Ramsey	M.O.	
	Lt.	W.M. Reade	M.O.	
P.3513	Sgt.	Burns	M.M.	
P.3515	"	Macey	D.O.M.	
H.39	"	Turk, W.O.	M.I.D.	
P.3509	"	Williams, A.H.	M.M.	
L.2413	A/Cpl.	Cable, G.V.	M.I.D.	
H.258	"	McLean, G.	M.M.	
O.35236	Opl.	Richmond, C.E.	M.M.	
H.183	"	Tall, S.A.	M.I.D.	
H.65890	Tpr.	Punk, J.K.	M.M.	
H.270	"	Armstrong, A.D.	M.I.D.	
Q.61998	"	MacPherson, J.W.	M.I.D.	
T.2633	"	Neale, R.	M.M.	
H.225	"	Scott, A.G.	M.M.	
H.315	"	Stein, R.G.	M.I.D.	
K.53000	Opl.	Adams, R.	M.M.	
H.165	"	Mathews, J.B.	M.M.	
M.27274	Tpr.	Bartlett, N.A.	M.I.D.	
M.102663	"	McIntosh, R.G.	"	
H.100186	"	Petten, E.H.	"	
H.135279	"	Shortred, J.T.	"	
H.259	"	Hall, H.A.	"	
K.64006	A/Cp.	Costello, W.J.	"	
	Major	Boyden, R.G.M.	Citation	
	Sgt	Lane, Walter	"	

RANK	NAME	AWARD	0
Major	G.L. Symmes	D.S.O.	
"	G.V.H. Watford	"	
A/Capt.	E.J. Perkins	" & M.O.	
Capt.	S. Valdeus	M.D.R.	
Lt.	A.M. Mackinnon	M.O.	
Lt.	D.P. Ramsey	M.O.	
Lt.	W.M. Reade	M.O.	
Sgt.	Burns	M.M.	
"	Macey	D.O.M.	
"	Turk, W.O.	M.I.D.	
"	Williams, A.H.	M.M.	
✓Opl.	Cable, G.V.	M.I.D.	
"	McLean, G.	M.M.	
Opl.	Richmond, C.E.	M.M.	
"	Tall, S.A.	M.I.D.	
Tpr.	Punk, J.K.	M.M.	
"	Armstrong, A.D.	M.I.D.	
"	MacPherson, J.W.	M.I.D.	
"	Neale, R.	M.M.	
"	Scott, A.G.	M.M.	
"	Stein, R.G.	M.I.D.	
Opl.	Adams, R.	M.M.	
"	Mathews, J.B.	M.M.	
Tpr.	Bartlett, N.A.	M.I.D.	
"	McIntosh, R.G.	"	
"	Petten, E.H.	"	
"	Shortred, J.T.	"	
"	Hall, H.A.	"	
A/Cp.	Costello, W.J.	"	



The Writings of Dr. Samuel Vaisrub

Medicine's Metaphors

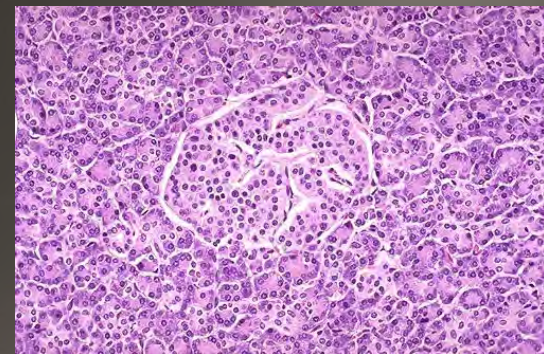
Alan Blum, MD



Iris (Rainbow, *Greek*)



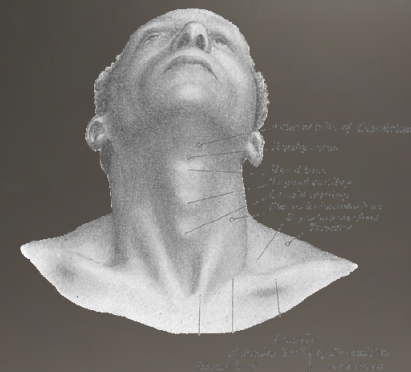
Thyroid storm



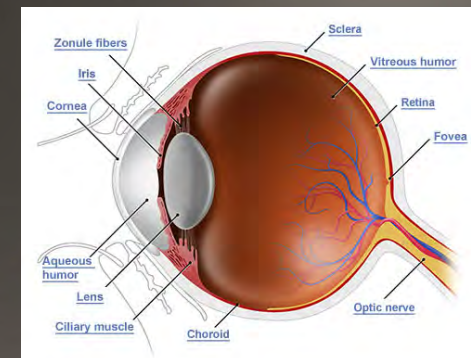
Pancreatic islets of Langerhans



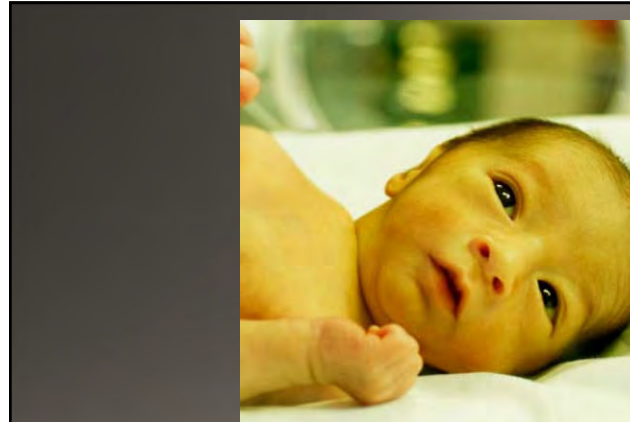
Staghorn calculus



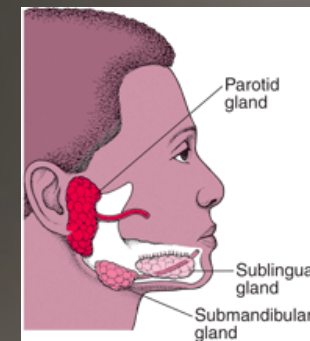
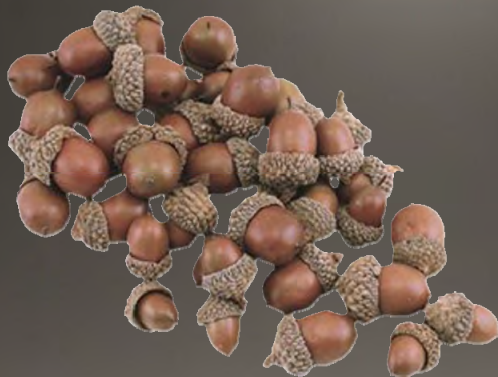
Thyroid cartilage ("Adam's apple")



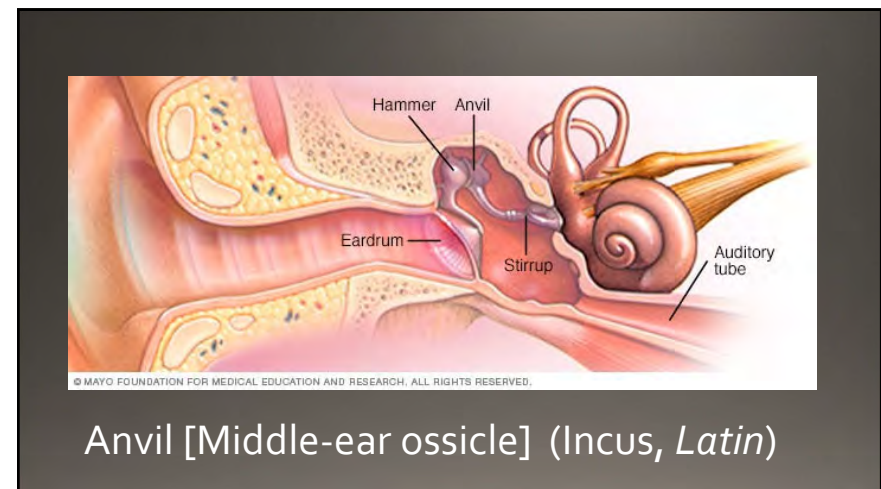
Lens (Lentil, *Latin*)



Jaundice [Yellowness] (Jaunice, *Old French*)

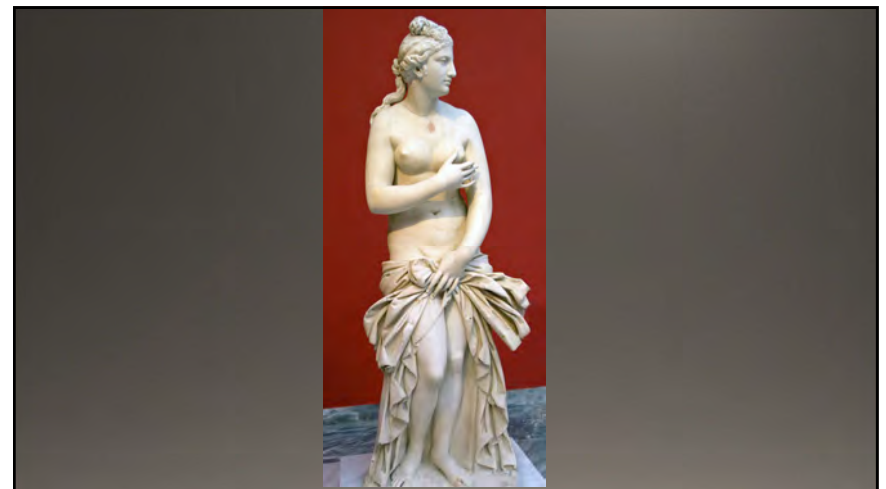


Gland (Acorn, *Latin*)



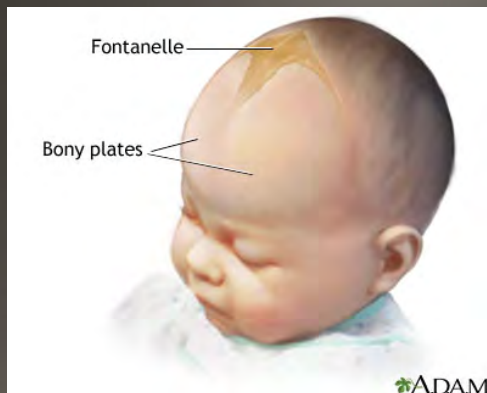


Anatomic snuffbox (*snuif*, *Dutch*)



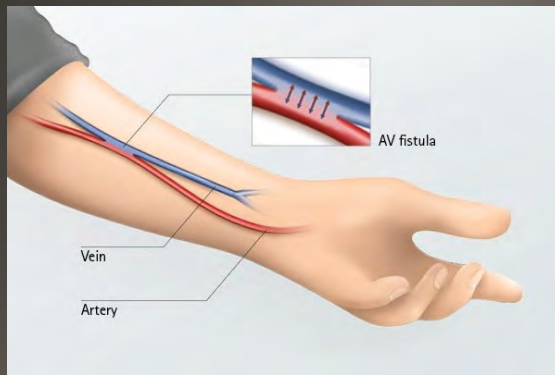


Aphrodisiac (Aphrodite, *Greek*)



Fontanelle (Little fountain, *French*)





Fistula (Pipe, *Latin*)



Lupus erythematosus rash



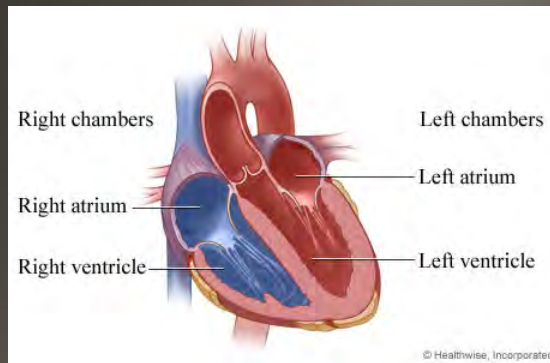


Acetabulum (Vinegar jar, *Latin*)

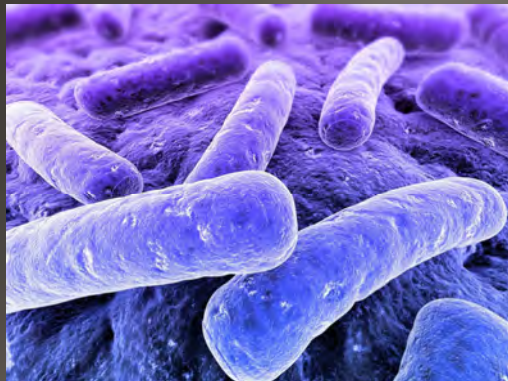


Arachnoid; angioma (Spider, *Greek*)





Atrium (Open-roofed central court, *Latin*)



Rod Bacterium (Rod, *Latin*)





Geographic tongue



Caesarian section (legend)





Chorea (Dance [Khoreia], *Greek*)



Cochlea (Snail [Kokhlia], *Greek*)

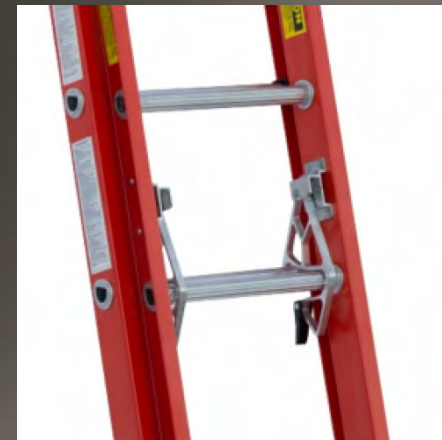




Coccus bacterium (Berry, *Greek*)



Cushing's (buffalo hump)





Climacteric (Ladder [Klimax], *Greek*)

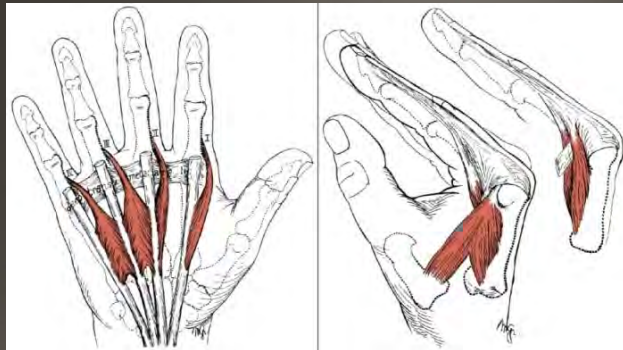


Coccyx (Cuckoo's bill, *Greek*)





Cortex of brain, kidney, and glands] (Bark, *Latin*)



Lumbricals (Worm, *Latin*)





Molar (Millstone [Mola], *Latin*)



Muscle (Mouse [Mus], *Latin*)





Navicular carpal bone (Little boat [Navis], *Latin*)



Hand bones suggesting Roman phalanx,
but originally *Greek* for log



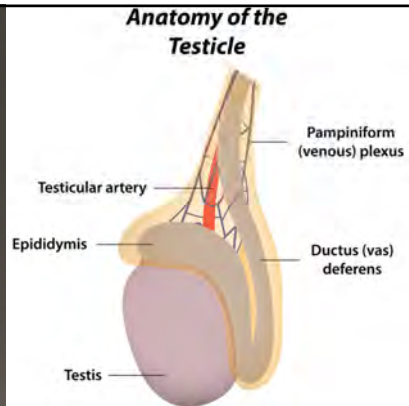


Ranula (Little frog [Rana], *Latin*)

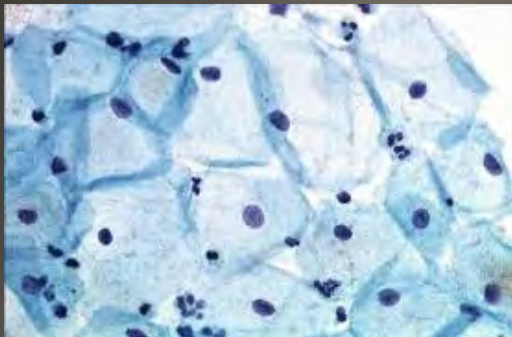


Scrotum (Quiver [Scrautum], *Latin*)



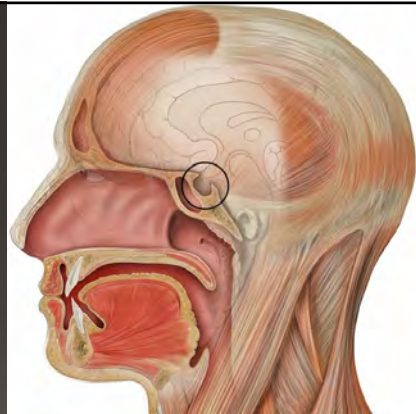


Testicle (Witness to virility [Testiculus], *Latin*)



Squamous (Fish scales [Squamosus], *Latin*)

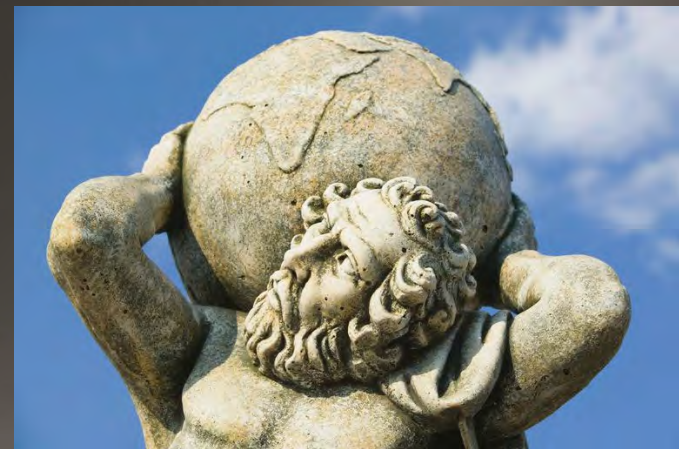


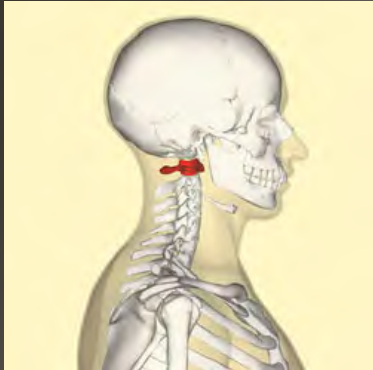


Sella turcica (Saddle, *Latin*)



Scalp (Schelpe, *Dutch*)





Atlas: first cervical vertebra



Strawberry red tongue of scarlet fever





