

So Many Ways to Die

Presented by Marion Peterson on March 5, 2007

Family historians encounter medical terminology as they read various certificates and records. Many terms are no longer used, for a variety of reasons.

Where can you find a information about an obsolete term?

1) On the Internet

http://www.afhs.ab.ca/data/old_diseases.html

http://www.paul_smith.doctors.org.uk/ArchaicMedicalTerms.htm

<http://www.cyndislist.com/medical.htm>

<http://www.answers.com/>

2) Books:

Medical Dictionaries (one at AFHS Library)

Before Modern Medicine: Diseases & Yesterday's Remedies by Elizabeth Briggs & Colin J. Briggs

A Medical Miscellany for Genealogists by Jeannette Jerger

Obsolete Medical Terminology (Monograph at AFHS Library)

3) Journals and Genealogy Magazines

Problems:

Descriptions may be too technical for the lay person.

Handwriting can be difficult to decipher.

Diagnosis may not have been accurate.

Some Examples:

- Apoplexy – paralyzed by stroke
- Bright's disease – a catch-all for kidney diseases and disorders
- Brain fever – meningitis
- Childbed fever – septic poisoning which sometimes followed childbirth
- Consumption – tuberculosis
- Dropsy – edema (retaining water)
- Grippe, grip or lagrippe – influenza
- Inanition – starvation
- Pernicious anemia – a severe form of anemia
- Phthisis - tuberculosis
- Quinsey, quinsy or quincy – tonsillitis
- Summer complaint – severe diarrhea during the summer, especially affecting children
- Winter fever - pneumonia

Epidemics:

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~canon/research-topic-deaths-epidemics.html> (Ontario)

<http://www.genealogy-quest.com/glossaries/epidemics.html> (mainly US)

http://www.ourwardfamily.com/history_of_diseases.htm (mainly UK)

<http://www.theplumber.com/plague.html> (general article about epidemics)

<http://www.cyndislist.com/medical.htm#Epidemics>