EDITORIAL

Gynecological endocrinology: a reflexion on its etymology

MANUEL NEVES-E-CASTRO

Clinica de Feminologia Holistica, Lisbon, Portugal

The name of most specialities, like endocrinology or gynecology, has been adopted without thinking on their etymology.

To make a long story short, I think that ‘Gynecological Endocrinology’ should instead be, at least, Gynecological Endocrinatry! Why?

The suffix ‘-logy’ means only the science of or the knowledge of, but not the treatment of.

The suffix ‘-atry’ is the one that means treatment of, like in psychiatry (different from psychology) or geriatry (different from gerontology).

Therefore, instead of Gynecological Endocrinology, the best designation should be Gynecoendocrinatry, because gyneco refers already to a gender (female). ‘Gynecological’ would mean again a reference to the knowledge of the female gender, whereas gyneco is in itself already an attribute to characterise the endocrinatry of the woman.

Many other specialities are, as well, improperly designated in the light of etymology.

Thus,

- Cardiology should be Cardiatry
- Nephrology should be Nefriatry
- Rheumatology should be Reumatry

But in Rheumatology the problem seems even greater, because this speciality is devoted not only to the treatment of rheumatism but also of bone diseases, like osteoporosis. Because the bone is the main component, it should be designated by osteatry. Osteology should be the study of the bone (morphologically and functionally).

Coming back to Gynecology, that should mean only the science or knowledge of the woman, but not her treatment, I realise that nobody will change to an etymologically more correct designation. Therefore, lacking another Greek radical to substitute for gyneco – I decided to use the latin femina – and made feminology to mean the knowledge, not the treatment, of the female gender. I added holistic because the WHO defined Health, holistically, as a condition of physical, psycho and social wellbeing and not only the absence of disease.

Therefore, with resignation, I must accept Gynecology (that should be gynecatry) and Holistic Feminology that is the real meaning of gynecology. May be one day I shall call myself gynecologist–gynecatrist!

Another incoming word is geripause, proposed by Eskin BA, that is supposed to mean the beginning of old age, after the late menopause. I rejected this word (in NAMS Menopause Management 2008;7(4):8) because it means death! Geripause is no more than the end of old age! Therefore, I proposed, instead, similarly to menarche, the word geriarche which means the beginning of old age. This is a name we should start using, rejecting geripause.

I am sure that this reflection will not change anything for the moment being. May be someday, one will see the birth of a Society of Ginecatry . . . . . . . . .

Who knows?

The purpose of this reflection is to invite my readers to think about the need to use as precise as possible designations for the words we use in Medicine.