

UNDERSTANDING MEDICAL JARGON: A TERMINOLOGY WALKTHROUGH ASPIRING NURSES

1. Abstract

Healthcare students often face difficulty in interpreting long medical reports, prescriptions, and care notes due to complex abbreviations and multi-root terminology. This case study simplifies the process by introducing a **root-prefix-suffix breakdown system**, combined with a structured vocabulary workbook. It includes tables, matching exercises, and practical examples to strengthen comprehension and confidence.

2. Learning Objectives

- Decode medical terms using root word analysis
- Memorize commonly used nursing abbreviations
- Interpret physician orders and patient notes confidently
- Understand real-world charting language

3. Basic Structure of Medical Terms

Component	Meaning	Example
Prefix	Before the root; modifies meaning	"Tachy-" = fast
Root	Core of the word; main idea	"Cardio" = heart
Suffix	After the root; indicates condition	"-itis" = inflammation

Full Word Example: Tachycarditis → Fast + Heart + Inflammation → *Inflammation due to abnormally fast heartbeat*

4. Common Nursing Abbreviations Table

Abbreviation	Full Form	Usage Example
BID	Twice a day	"Administer paracetamol BID"

PRN	As needed	"Give sedative PRN for anxiety"
NPO	Nothing by mouth	"Patient is NPO after midnight"
IV	Intravenous	"Start IV fluids immediately"
Q4H	Every 4 hours	"Monitor vitals Q4H"
SOB	Shortness of Breath	"Patient reported SOB on exertion"
ADLs	Activities of Daily Living	"Assess ADLs for discharge planning"

5. Exercise: Decode These Terms

Term	Breakdown	Meaning
Hematology	Hemat- (blood) + -logy (study of)	Study of blood
Osteoarthritis	Osteo- (bone) + arthr (joint) + -itis	Joint inflammation involving bones
Dysphagia	Dys- (difficulty) + -phagia (eating)	Difficulty in swallowing
Hypoglycemia	Hypo- (low) + glyc (sugar) + -emia	Low blood sugar

6. Sample Nursing Chart Note with Embedded Jargon

"Patient admitted post-fall with complaints of SOB and dizziness. NPO after midnight for scheduled MRI. Vitals stable. Administered 500ml IV NS. PRN dose of lorazepam given for anxiety. Monitor Q4H. Evaluate ADLs before discharge."

Interpretation Task: List all abbreviations, decode, and explain what they mean in layman terms.

7. Student Tasks

1. Match 15 abbreviations with full forms using provided flashcards
2. Break down 10 complex terms using prefix-root-suffix structure
3. Translate a nursing note into patient-friendly language
4. Complete a mock MAR (Medication Administration Record)

8. Learning Outcome Matrix

Skill	Activity That Builds It
Terminology decoding	Word breakdown exercises
Abbreviation fluency	Table memorization and note reading
Medical note interpretation	Nursing chart analysis
Patient communication skill	Layman translation task

9. Conclusion

Mastering medical language is not about memorization alone—it's about **pattern recognition** and **context-based understanding**. This case study offers foundational strategies that help nursing and healthcare students navigate complex clinical language and documentation with ease.

10. References

- Mosby's Medical Dictionary
- Saunders Nursing Drug Handbook
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Terminology Services
- Nursing Charting Standards – American Nurses Association (ANA)