

## Suggested Lay Language for Informed Consent

Since informed consent documents need to be accessible to their audience, and since the lay population is not generally well versed in technical and scientific terminology, such jargon should be explained or common terms should be substituted. Complex scientific concepts should be translated into simple concepts that the typical subject can read and understand. Some examples of suggested lay language translations for informed consent forms are as follows:

**Acute:** new, recent, sudden

**Adverse effect:** side effect

**Aerosolized:** converted to a vapor or mist to be inhaled

**Afebrile:** without fever

**Alzheimer disease:** a brain disorder characterized chiefly by an impairment in the ability to think and to remember

**Analgesic:** pain reliever or relieving

**Anaphylaxis, — shock:** a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction including difficulty breathing and a fall in blood pressure to shock levels

**Anesthetic:** a drug that reduces the ability to perceive pain

**Arm:** one part of a multiple-part study

**Artery:** one of the muscular blood vessels carrying blood from the heart to all parts of the body

**Aspirate:** to remove fluid from a body cavity or cyst

**Assay:** lab test

**Basal acid output:** acid produced by the resting stomach before food or medication

**Benign:** not malignant or threatening, usually without serious consequence

**Biopsy:** surgical removal of a small bit of tissue for microscopic examination

**Blind design:** “single-blind” means that the patient is not told which of the two or more possible treatments (medicine A, B, or C, for instance) will be given, but physicians and nurses will know. “Double-blind” means that the physician and nurses taking care of the patient also do not know.

**Bolus:** an amount given all at once

**Broad spectrum:** has a broad range of effectiveness, e.g. drug suppresses infections due to many classes of bacteria rather than just one class

**Calorie:** the energy value of food

**Carcinogenic:** capable of causing cancer

**CAT (CT) scan:** a computerized x-ray examination

**Catheter:** a thin, flexible plastic tube for withdrawing or introducing fluids

**Central line:** a thin plastic tube placed through a vein in the upper chest wall or neck and advanced into a large vein near the heart

**Central nervous system (CNS):** the brain and spinal cord

**Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF):** fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord

**Chemotherapy:** treatment of a disease, such as cancer, by drugs

**Chronic:** continuing for a long time

**Claustrophobic:** fear of being enclosed in a small space

**Clinical Trial:** an experiment in patients

**Cognitive:** thinking

**Controlled Trial:** a study in which the experimental treatment procedure is compared to a standard (control) treatment or procedure

**Contraindicated:** should not be used

**Culture:** test for infection or organisms that could cause infection

**Double-Blind:** a study in which neither the investigators nor the subjects know what drug the subject is receiving

**Dysplasia:** abnormal cells

**Edema:** swelling due to excess fluid in the tissues

**Efficacy:** effectiveness

**Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG):** a recording of the heart's electrical activity

**Electrodes:** pieces of metal attached to wires

**Electroencephalogram (EEG):** a recording of the brain's electrical activity

**Endoscopy:** a procedure in which a thin, flexible tube with a light at its end is passed through the mouth or rectum to allow inspection of the gastrointestinal tract

**Esophagus:** swallowing tube between throat and stomach

**Failed therapy:** subjects do not "fail therapies" but rather therapies fail to help subjects

**Febrile:** feverish

**Flourescein:** a florescent dye that can be injected into an arm vein to help examination of the blood vessels inside the eye

**Flushing:** warmth and reddening of the skin

**Hematoma:** a bruise, a black-and-blue mark or lump caused by the escape of blood into the tissues

**Hepatitis:** liver inflammation

**Heparin Lock:** a needle placed in the arm with blood thinner to keep the blood from clotting

**Hives:** an itchy, bumpy skin rash

**Hyperglycemia:** high blood sugar

**Hypertension:** high blood pressure

**Hypoglycemia:** low blood sugar

**Hypokalemia:** low blood potassium

**Hypotension:** low blood pressure

**Indwelling catheter:** a thin, flexible plastic tube that remains in a vein or artery for hours or days

**Infusion:** slow injection of fluid into a vein

**Intravenously:** through a vein

**Jaundice:** yellow discoloration of the skin and eyes

**Laparotomy:** surgery to examine the abdominal organs

**Lumbar puncture:** spinal tap

**Malaise:** feeling "lousy"

**Manometer:** instrument for measuring pressure

**Metabolism:** chemical activity of the body; drug metabolism refers to chemical change of the drug by the body

**Metastasized:** cancer that has traveled from its origin to other parts of the body

**MRI (magnetic resonance imaging):** study of body structure by a magnetic field and radio waves

**Monitor:** check on; keep track of; watch carefully

**Morbidity:** undesired result or complication

**Mortality:** death

**Mucositis:** painful sores in the mouth

**Myocardial infarction (MI):** heart attack

**Necrosis:** death of tissue

**Neurotransmitter:** chemical messenger in the nervous system

**Occlusion:** blockage

**Oncology:** the study of tumors or cancer

**Percutaneous:** through the skin

**Perfusate:** washing solution

**Peritoneal cavity:** abdominal cavity

**PET scan (positron emission tomography):** a technique that “labels” active areas of the brain; it requires the injection of small amounts of radioactive tracers

**Pharmacology of a drug:** how your body handles this drug

**Phlebitis:** inflammation of a vein

**Placebo:** an inactive substance like a sugar pill; a fake drug

**Plasma:** the liquid portion of the blood

**Pneumothorax:** air inside the chest wall compressing the lung

**PRN:** as needed

**Protocol:** a plan of study; clinical research study

**Random:** by chance, like the flip of a coin

**Receptors:** molecules on or in cells that interact with hormones, neurotransmitters, drugs, etc.

**Relapse:** the return of a disease

**Remission:** lessening of the symptoms of a disease

**Resect, resected:** remove surgically

**Retrospective Study:** a study looking back over past experience

**Sepsis:** infection in the bloodstream

**Serotonin:** one of the chemicals that act as messengers in the nervous system

**Triglyceride level:** level of one of the types of fat in the blood

**Ultrasound:** examination using sound waves

**Venipuncture:** puncture of a vein

**Void:** urinate