

Many professions use jargon, a collection of specialized or technical language unique to the field that may not be understood by people outside of that field. The use of slang, or informal words and expressions, as well as abbreviations is also common. Medicine is certainly no exception. Medical graduates (IMGs) who enter U.S. residency or fellowship positions will find that there are many terms even from “Medicalese” in other English speaking countries,

House Staff has developed this glossary of “Medicalese” to help orient new medical commonly used

by doctors, nurses, and other medical staff in U.S. hospitals and clinics. It is our hope that this glossary will facilitate understanding of these terms when they are used by others.

Note that the table below includes several abbreviations or acronyms. These are included because they are often spoken as such. However, it may be better, especially for those new to “Medicalese,” to say the complete term in order to avoid any confusion.

It is important to understand that some of the slang, abbreviations, and jargon commonly used within medical practice might sound insensitive to patients or their families. These terms, therefore, should not be used in situations where they may be overheard. Unfortunately, some misguided medical staff may also use terms that are disrespectful or belittling to patients. Such inappropriate terms have no place whatsoever in the professional practice of medicine and are not included on this list.

As with all resources included in the Online Orientation for Incoming House Staff, the “Medicalese” glossary is a work in progress. If you have suggestions for additional words, phrases, or abbreviations to be added to this list, please submit them for consideration to bey9003@nyp.org.

Term	
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Term	Definition	Use
boarders	patients from other services occupying beds on the team's ward or floor; usually unwelcome	I have two boarders on my service.
boo boo / owee	what children may call an injury	Can you show me your boo boo [or owee]?
bounce / bounce back	patient returns to service from which he or she had recently been discharged or transferred	He was discharged yesterday, but he bounced back today.
BP	blood pressure	The BP is too high!
brady / brady down	slowing heart rate	Whoops, he is starting to brady down.
bronch (pronounced bronk)	perform a bronchoscopy	Pulmonary is going to bronch her tomorrow morning.
bugs	germs; infecting organisms (bacteria, viruses, etc.)	Her decreased immunity sets her up for all kinds of bugs.
bump	to increase the dose of a drug	He is still having too many seizures; let's bump the Dilantin.
CABG (pronounced cabbage)	coronary artery bypass graft	He had a CABG three years ago.
CAD	coronary artery disease	He was admitted for workup of his CAD.
call	1) night or weekend duty at the hospital; also, "call night," "call schedule," etc. 2) short for judgment call; decision in which there is no clearly right answer	1) I'm on call this weekend. 2) It's a tough call whether or not to add another antibiotic.
call a code	to initiate or announce the start of a patient resuscitation effort	I just lost her pulse; call a code!
cath	catheterization	What did the cath show about his coronaries?
CBC	complete blood count	Get a CBC on him tomorrow morning.
Cdiff	Clostridium difficile	She grew out Cdiff in her cultures.
Chem 7	same as basic metabolic panel (electrolytes and renal function)	Everyone on his service gets a Chem 7 on admission.
CHF	congestive heart failure	His CHF is so bad he can't lie down flat.
code	to use full emergency measures to resuscitate a patient who has suffered a heart or breathing stoppage; also, a noun referring to the process	How long has this code been going?
consent [a patient]	go through the consent process with a patient in order to obtain his/her signed consent	Make sure you consent Mr. Green for his procedure tomorrow.
CPS	Child Protective Services	These bruises look suspicious; we need to get CPS involved.
crash	sudden, rapid, and often unanticipated deterioration of a patient	He looked fine. I never expected him to crash like that.
crash cart	a cart on wheels that contains all drugs, equipment, and devices for managing cardiac arrest and other emergencies that is brought to the patient's bedside	I can't get a pulse! Call for the crash cart!

Term	Definition	Use
GI cocktail	a combination of medications to treat gastric distress, variable by institution	Let's try a GI cocktail and see how she responds.
GSW	gunshot wound	He sustained a GSW of the left chest.
H&H	hemoglobin and hematocrit	What was his last H&H?
high	under the influence of narcotics or other mood/mind altering drugs	When he presented to the ED he was obviously high.
I&D	incision and drainage	The only way to deal with an abscess is to I&D it.
I&O	measurement of fluid intake and output	All renal patients need strict I&Os.
keep an eye on	watchful waiting, continued observation	Let's hold off on the blood and keep an eye on him for now.
line	intravenous access	You are going to need a big line to give that drug.
LOC	loss of consciousness	When he fell, was there any LOC?
LP	lumbar puncture (spinal tap)	Was there blood in the LP?
lytes	electrolytes	His lytes suggest dehydration.
MI	myocardial infarction	This EKG clearly shows an old MI.
migraine cocktail	a combination of medications to treat migraine headaches, variable by institution	Let's try a migraine cocktail and see how she responds.
MVA	motor vehicle accident	He was the passenger in an MVA.
neb	medicated nebulizer treatment	That asthmatic kid needs another neb.
orthopods, pods	orthopedists	After we stabilize him, we need to get the pods to see him.
out	unresponsive	He was out for about 15 minutes after his head injury.
pace	regulate or provide a heart rhythm by applying an artificial pacemaker	Her rate is dropping way too low; we need to pace her.
PCP / PMD	primary care provider or primary physician	We need to get some more information from his PCP [or PMD].
PE	pulmonary embolism	With sudden chest pain and shortness of breath you always worry about a PE.
PEG / PEG tube	percutaneous gastrostomy used for enteral feeding	She is going to need a PEG [or PEG tube] to get her some sustenance.
PND	paroxysmal nocturnal dyspnea	PND is one of the hallmarks of CHF.
preemie	a prematurely born baby	That preemie is going to need to go to the PICU right away.
prepped	prepared for a procedure	Get her prepped for an LP.
pulse ox	pulse oximetry	He doesn't look so good, let's get him on a pulse ox.

Term	Definition	Use
round	briefly evaluate each patient on a service by physically visiting the patient at the bedside, reviewing his or her progress, and planning further management	We round at 7 a.m. every day.
run the list	review updated diagnostic results, clinical course, and treatment plans for all patients on a service, on a patient by patient basis	Let's run the list right after lunch.
sharps	Needles, scalpels, IV catheters anything that could be contaminated and needs to be placed in a sharps list	