

JOHN'S JARGON...



JOHN IODICE

Hello and welcome to the summer edition of the Georgia Scroll. I hope you are enjoying the warm weather. After last year's record rainfall, I'm ready for some 95-degree days. I know that may sound fool-hearty, but a natural spring has emerged in my front yard. I'd like a little help from the sun to dry it up.

For those of you who don't know me, I'm a self-styled "jack of all trades." I have way too many hobbies and not enough

time. One of my interests is etymology. I'm also a student of entomology, but that's a topic for another day. Etymology is the study of the history of words with the associated changes of meaning over time. Knowing what a word originally meant can be very enlightening and can lead to endless hours of debate and conjecture, if you're so inclined.

The word I'd like to examine today is: *patient*. In healthcare, we use this word hundreds of times every week to describe our single unit of measure. "How many patients did we register yesterday?" "Has anyone seen the patient in room 533?" "Our patient-to-nurse ratio is extremely disproportionate." While we all know what a patient is, do you know what the word means?

A quick search online reveals some interesting facts. "Patient" comes from the Latin *patientia* and the old French *pacience* from sometime early in the 13th century. In essence, both words mean "to suffer." So, a patient is "one who suffers or endures." To have *patience* is quite literally to suffer or endure through something or someone. While this may seem like common sense and simplistic, I'm still amazed at how often I have to remind people what it means to be a patient, "one who suffers." We've all been one, and we all know them. They're our parents, our children, our friends and neighbors.

Remembering what it means to be a patient is crucial in understanding what it means to be empathetic. Empathy is "putting oneself in another's shoes" or "suffering alongside another, even if only briefly." In every training class I've ever held, I draw the class's attention to the words "patient" and "empathy." In my opinion, these two words help to define healthcare and healthcare workers.

While we focus on reimbursement, RAC's, cost-containment strategies and contract negotiations, let us not forget why we do what we do. We exist to work with and on behalf of those who suffer and we share in their struggle, if only for a short time.

I hope you all have a great summer and I look forward to seeing you in the fall.

John Iodice

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