



# Conversation starters in healthcare

*Sharing musings & resources with language trainers of healthcare professionals*



## Totally pyjamaed!

### *546 words for drunkenness*

On a Ryanair flight back from Ireland, where the poor attendants were forced to deal with the results of a weekend of stag-nights and hen-dos, I was reminded of the challenges of the serious drinking culture that pervades our shores in the UK. Just like the flight crew, many of my learners work in Emergency Medicine and so also spend their weekends dealing with similarly challenging patients.

But health issues aside, what kind of impact does our drinking culture have on the English language? Well, not unsurprisingly, quite a lot. While the inebriated state of my fellow passengers is nothing to be proud of, the sheer number of words to describe their state does at least merit some attention. According to a [study](#) by Christina Sanchez-Stockhammer, there are no less than 546 drunkonyms, or words for drunkenness in UK English, including *gazeboed* and *carparked* and my personal favourite, *pyjamaed* (!)

In some cases, the origins of these words is obvious: *elephant's trunk*, *Adrian Quist* and *Oliver Twist* find their roots in rhyming slang, while the descriptive nature of *annihilated*, *zoned*, *obliterated* and *slaughtered* is fairly self-explanatory. In another group there is a link with food: *mashed*, *pie-eyed*, *pickled* and *cabbaged*, although, why this is, I'm not sure, while others seem quite nonsensical: *pifflicated*, *peelywally* and *plotzed*, with the conclusion being that more or less any word can be turned into a drunkonym.

In her research, Sanchez-Stockhammer mentions that one of the reasons the British have so many drunkonyms could be because it allows us to discuss drinking in a light-hearted way that helps conceal the terrible consequences of habitual binge-drinking. She may well have a point.

On a final note, if you think our learners are going to struggle to understand this particular word list, consider claims made by lexicographer, Susie Dent who totals some [3,000 words](#) for being drunk. I'll let you discuss amongst yourselves who is right.

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# A-Z of medical terminology

## *I is for ...*

*idio-*, meaning *separate or distinct* e.g. *idiopathic*, *idiosyncrasy*

Idiosyncrasy describes someone's unusual behaviour, but you possibly didn't realise it also has a meaning in the medical context. In pharmacology, idiosyncrasy is an adverse reaction to a particular drug that is very rarely seen in other patients but can be fatal. For those with a subscription, [study.com](#) has a fab little [video](#) about the term.



## *I is also for ...*

*-ism* - meaning *disease, condition*, e.g. *astigmatism*, *rheumatism*

A treatable curvature of the eye, [astigmatism](#) causes blurred vision both for distance and near vision. It is a condition that can be present from birth, but could also occur as a result of injury or surgery.



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## Patient stories



### *Monty the hedgehog*

A few weeks ago, the UK learned about a hedgehog named [Bounce](#) and a condition known as 'balloon syndrome'. In 2017, the [Vet Times](#) reported on a similar case in Scotland and above is Monty inflated to the size of a football.

Usually, balloon syndrome occurs for one of two reasons. Either when a bacterial infection results in gas inflating the area under the skin, or because of a rupture in the lungs which causes air to flow from the lungs into the body cavity. The hedgehog essentially inflates itself with every breath it takes.

In her [article](#) for the *Veterinary Nursing Journal*, Bizzy McClure offers an overview of treatment and care for hedgehogs in case you work with vets or simply find this item inspires you to learn more.

You'll be pleased to hear that Bounce has since made a full recovery and been released back into the wilds of Gloucestershire.

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# International Nurses Day (12 May)

## *It was nothing, but it was absolutely everything*

Running a newsletter like Conversation Starters in Healthcare it would be seriously remiss of me not to celebrate International Nurses Day, albeit a couple of days behind schedule ...

To celebrate, the UK's Royal College of Nurses (RCN) released a series of 1 min videos telling stories like that of [Dara](#) bringing comfort and reassurance to his patients in Belfast. His very poignant comment: 'It was nothing, but it was everything' just reinforces how invaluable his presence is in the lives of his patients.

The RCN are also celebrating the announcement that King Charles III has just recently become their new [patron](#). As Prince of Wales, he has already provided his support to the [Nurse Cadet Scheme](#) which allows 17-18 year olds the chance to participate in a variety of clinical placements.

[Luke](#) tells how he is now looking forward to a career in mental health nursing as a result of the scheme.



And finally, for a light-hearted sing-along to the tune of 'Stayin' Alive', nursing YouTuber, Desiree Chaffin takes us behind the scenes of the ER in her [video](#) post from last year's US nursing week.

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# Professional Development



## *Patient-Centred or Patient-Driven? Exploring new ways of patient collaboration*

Catherine Richards Golini, Director of EALTHY will be speaking on a topic of interest to each and everyone of us - patient collaboration.

To [register](#)

23 May 2024 @ 16:00 (UK)

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## *Teaching Pronunciation Made Easy*

ELT teacher trainer extraordinaire, Jo Gakonga has just released a new course! If your OET candidates are experiencing problems with intelligibility, then Jo's course will give you the skills you need to help them tackle this issue.

To benefit from a discount [sign up](#) soon







## Exploring ideas and strategies in teaching caring and compassion in English

Loredana leads the next EALTHY webinar which looks into the teaching of soft skills on degree courses.

To register

30 May 2024 @ 11:00 (UK)

## 6th English for Healthcare Conference (EALTHY) (6-7 Sept 2024, Brighton, UK)

A trip to Brighton? Why not?

This will be my second trip to Brighton this year and hopefully, aside from participating in the 6th English for Healthcare Conference, I'll also find time to take a few snaps to add to my collection.



Testimonials

Do you **already** prepare candidates for OET?

Read how this course **impacted** on course **design & delivery** for one **OET trainer**.

Register Now  
for **October 2024**

How to teach clinical communication

[www.englishformedicine.net](http://www.englishformedicine.net)

When I set about devising my teacher training course, '*How to Teach Clinical Communications Skills*', I didn't expect there to be a demand from those already experienced in preparing candidates for OET. I was wrong, however.

This lovely [testimonial](#) is from a participant who is passionate about the Occupational English Test and the role she plays in helping shape the future of overseas nurses. Read about how the course helped to further develop her knowledge of the principles behind OET and also gain valuable skills in methodology and course design specific to the healthcare context.

If this testimonial resonates with you ...

► [Registration is open for October 2024.](#)

► [Contact me](#) for an informal chat to discuss how this course might help you.

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