Anatomical Terms and Their Derivation

As an aid to comprehension, this book presents the roots from which many descriptive terms and compounds are derived.

Anatomical terms are the vocabulary of medicine. Anatomy began as a descriptive science in the days when Latin was the universal scientific language. Early anatomists described the structures they saw in that language, comparing them to common and familiar objects, or borrowing terms from the Greek and Arabic masters before them. In anatomic terminology, common Latin or Greek words are used as such for any part of the body for which the ancients had a name. For many other structures, scientific names have been invented either by using certain classical words which appear to be descriptive of the part concerned, or commonly, by combining Greek or Latin roots to form a new compound term. Memorization of such terms without understanding their meaning can lead to mental indigestion.

For practical convenience, the book is organized into abbreviations, prefixes and suffixes, general terms common to all body regions, short lists for each major body part, and an alphabetical list covering the entire body. This pocket-sized handbook is essential for anyone wishing to learn and understand medical terms.

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