

“Symptoms” of Drug Names:
Portmanteau Words as Patterns in Medical Terminology

Mihai Crudu, Ph. D. (Suceava / Bucharest)

Abstract:

Terminology studies are yet to address topical issues related to word formation of commonly used medical terms. The aim of this paper is to tackle this gap in knowledge by analysing a particular corpus of drug names that are often formed by blending two words.

Linguistically, many recent medicine names are portmanteau words, as they basically refer to the disease proper, the intended healing effect, the corresponding field of application and / or the pharmaceutical company. On the one hand, they can be user friendly, e.g., “Grippostad“ (*Grippe* + manufacturer “Stada”), “Vertigoheel” (*Vertigo*, i.e., “Dizziness”, + *heel*, a transformation of *heal*, Eng.) or “Tromcardin” (manufacturer “Trommsdorff” + *cardin*, a transformation of the prefix *cardio-*, that is associated with “heart”). On the other hand, drug names can also refer to active pharmaceutical ingredients; therefore, words like “Ibuprofen”, “Olynth” or “Umckaloabo” are understandable to healthcare specialists only.

In the present paper, I examine such discursive practices, looking into notions of structure and meaning in medical portmanteau words.