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THE USE OF SHORTENING IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES. A PRACTICAL REVIEW FOR NURSES

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SUMMARY

Shortening as a word building process has become very productive in present day English. Abbreviations in nursing have also found a way for professional and quick communication. The main goals of this article, based on actual teaching-learning problems, is to provide some practical activities to give the learners opportunities to get acquainted with and practice abbreviations in an effective and communicative way, and to provide a glossary of the most frequently used abbreviations by nurses.

Subject headings: ABBREVIATIONS; COMMUNICATION; NURSES' INSTRUCTIONS [PUBLICATION TYPE]

Shortening is considered a very productive word-building process. It is the dropping of the latter part of a word so as to produce a new and shorter word of the same meaning. The strain of modern life is obviously one of the reasons for this development. For example, almost all written material in hospital is written to be read at a glance because consultants read them before they do their rounds, and new nurses to acquaint with their patients. Similarly, the daily ward reports are read by the offgoing nurse in charge to the oncoming staff.¹

In English, shortenings may be present in written and spoken forms. Each of them has its own pattern, but as there is a constant exchange between both, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether a given shortening was originated in one or in the other.

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An abbreviation is a shortened form of a word or phrase used for brevity especially in writing in place of the whole. Two possible types of correlation should be noted between the written and spoken forms:

1. If the abbreviation can be read as an ordinary English word, it will be read as one.

For example,

UFO - Unidentified Flying Object

Polyps - Polymorphonuclear leucocytes

MSU - Mid Stream Urine

2. The other group consists of initial abbreviations with alphabetic reading retained.

For example,

P.R - pupil reaction

B.P.- blood pressure

P- pulse

The term abbreviation may also be used for a shortened form of a written word or phrase used in a text in place of the whole for brevity. For example,

Cas.- casualty

Elix.- elixir

Caps.- capsule

Not much has been written about abbreviations in English for Foreign Language Teaching and less in English for Specific Purpose (ESP), even though in the practice of nursing, this word-building process has found a field of development.

High frequency use of abbreviations like: ADL- Activities of Daily Living

a.c.- (Latin: ante cibum) before meals

b.i.d.- (Latin: bis in die) twice a day

h.s.- (Latin: hora somni) at bed time

n.r.- (Latin: non repetatur) do not repeat

p.c.- (Latin: post cibum) after meals

p.r.n.- (Latin: pro re nata) as needed

q. ____ h. -(Latin: quaque ____ hora) every ____ hours

q.o.d. every other day

t.i.d.- (Latin: ter in die) three times a day

for instance, are not present in any of the syllabus used at present in ESP courses in English subject for nursing learners.²⁻⁴

Daily teaching has demonstrated that there is a handicap with the mastery of abbreviations. There is a lack of knowledge, which constitutes a language barrier. One of the problems for learners is that there is no correspondence between the English and the Spanish abbreviations as to initials. Therefore, the learner cannot make a transfer from their mother tongue to the target language. Another problem is that teachers of English tend to concentrate their teaching on oral practice, whereas,

writing has turned to be a neglected skill. Therefore, there is no teaching, and there is no practical activity to use abbreviations. Moreover, abbreviations are not an objective in the ESP syllabuses in Schools of Medical Sciences in Cuba, even though there are around fifty in the ESP textbooks used at present.²⁻⁴ Consequently, specialists need to study by themselves the majority of abbreviations, in order to be able to use them when working overseas in English speaking communities, because there is no enough bibliography for teachers of ESP to deepen in their use in the field of nursing.

This article sets out to provide practical activities in the teaching-learning process of abbreviations for nursing learners. These practical activities are task focused. They can first be done as a classroom activity and putting them into practice in training-on-the-job activities such as ward rounds, grand rounds, and shift-handover.⁵

EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1

Puzzle

a. Find ten abbreviations

A	B	D	M	H	L	O	P
N	X	G	C	T	N	D	I
B	J	I	C	E	D	A	N
P	K	O	J	V	D	T	W
Z	U	E	R	N	D	X	D
D	B	F	L	D	X	Z	S
O	X	B	J	C	L	A	Q
A	H	W	F	F	C	T	J

b. What to they stand for?

KEY ANSWER

Abd	- abdomen	DAT	- diet as tolerated
GI	- gastro-intestinal	ER	- emergency room
H	- hour	DOA	- dead on arrival

BP - blood pressure dsq - dressing
 cc - cubic centimeter Dx - diagnosis
 Hd - fluid F - Fahrenheit
 JUV - jugular vein distention KUB - kidney, ureter, and bladder

EXERCISE 2

Puzzle

- a. Find the abbreviation, which stands for:
- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| morning care patient | three times a day |
| head injuries | casualty |
| Electrocardiogram | every other day |
| bed bath nothing by mouth | total nursing care |

A	M	P	T	E	A	H	I
I	L	D	Z	C	B	O	W
B	B	E	W	K	T	N	C
G	M	F	F	A	C	T	B
C	A	S	O	T	E	Z	N
D	T	G	P	I	D	G	P
K	X	H	M	D	Z	T	O
Q	O	D	T	M	X	O	A

EXERCISE 3

Choose a or b according to the information given:

1. The doctor said that the foetus was in breech presentation

a. bp	b. BP
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2. Nurses make emphasis on a careful

a. a.m. care	b. AMC
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3. The nurse replied that the patient had to be sent to the

a. DR.	b. dr.
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EXERCISE 4

Transcribe:

- a. Some nursing notes are very brief, like the following example. Can you transcribe them?

Mr. J. Smith N/P # skull R.T.A. admitted via cas. 10: 30 p.m. Unconscious since admission. Head of bed raised. P, BP, PR reordered 1/2 hourly.

- b. Some notes are not so brief. Fill in the gaps in these notes, not using abbreviations.

Mr. J. Smith's diagnosis: fractured skull. Involved in a _____
The patient was admitted via _____ at _____
And has been unconscious since admission. The head of his bed has been raised. His _____, _____ and _____
have been recorded _____ since admission.

KEY ANSWER

N/P	- new patient	R.T.A.	- road traffic accident
Pt	- patient	P.R.	- pupil reaction
Cas	- casualty	#	- fractured

EXERCISE 5

- a. Abbreviate the underlined terms (teacher writes on board):

1. He was brought in with *head injuries*.
2. The doctor ordered an *electrocardiogram*.
3. She was given a *stomach washout*.
4. He was given a *bed bath*.
5. She will need *total nursing care*.
6. We have to get a *mid-stream urine* sample from John Smith this morning.

KEY ANSWER

HI, EKG or ECG, SW, BB, TNC, MSU.

EXERCISE 6

- a. In the following sentences some of the words are abbreviated. Can you guess what they mean?

1. The nurse took the patient's TPR every four hours.
2. The doctor did a lumbar puncture and the CSF was clear.
3. He was examined PR.
4. The patient could not PU and had to be catheterized.
5. Don't give Mrs. Azukeli a drink – she's NPO.
6. To be D/W doctor Schmidt

KEY ANSWER

TPR	temperature, pulse and respiration
CSF	cerebral spinal fluid
PR	pupil reaction
PU	passed urine
NPO	nothing by mouth
D/W	discussed with

EXERCISE 7

- a. Read the following nursing notes and discuss with a partner what they mean. Then write a full version, using complete sentences and no abbreviations.

T.N.C. N.P.U. BP raised. PR unequal 8 p.m.. Doctor X informed. Seen by Doctor X 8:30 p.m.. For burr-holes 10 p.m.

KEY ANSWER

Total nursing care has been given. The patient has not passed urine since admission. At 8 p.m. his blood pressure was raised and the pupil reaction to light was unequal. Doctor X was informed. The patient was seen by Doctor X at 8.30 p.m. and is to have a burr-hole operation on his skull at 10:00 p.m.

EXERCISE 8

- a. You are the off-going shift nurse. You are to present written shift handover report (use abbreviations when needed). You have only got five minutes to report on three cases.
- b. Present the shift handover report to the other nurse who is coming on.

GLOSSARY

Commonly used abbreviations and meanings in nursing.

A

+, &	And
a.	Before
a.c.	before meals
A.M.	Morning
āā	of each
Abd.	Abdomen
abort.	Abortion
accomd.	Accommodation
ACTH	adrenocorticotrophic hormone
ad lib.	as desired
ad.	up to
ADH.	Antidiuretic hormone
ADL.	activities of daily living
alt. dieb.	alternate days
Amb	ambulatory
Approx.	approximately/about
ASA	aspirin
Ax.	axillary (i.e., axillary temp.)

B

b.i.d	two times a day or twice a day
baso.	basophile
BCG	(vaccine) basille Calmetter Guerin
bili.	bilirubin
bl. cult.	blood culture
BM	bowel movement
BMR	basal metabolic rate
BP	blood pressure
br.sounds	breath sounds
BRP	bathroom privileges
BS	blood sugar
BSP	bronsulphalein
BUN	blood urea nitrogen

C

C	centrigade (37 °)
c̄.	with

C/o≠	complained of
C+S	culture and sensitive
ca	cancer
CA.	carcinoma or cancer
cat.	catheter
CBC	complete blood count
cc	cubic centimeter (or cm ³)
CC.	chief complaint
ceph. floc.	cephalin flocculation test
cl.	chloride
cldy.	cloudy
CNS	Central Nervous System
CNS	Centrl Nervous System
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
cont.	continued
CPC	Clinicopathological conference
CSF	Cerebro spinal fluid
CVA	cerebrovascular accident
CVP	central venous pressure
chol.	cholesterol
chol. est.	cholesterol esters

D

D&C	dilation & curettage
D/W	discussed with
D+C	dilation and curettage
DAT	diet as tolerated
DC	discontinue (i.e., "DC Lasix.")
DC'd	discontinued (i.e., "Lasix DC'd.")
decr.	diminished or decreased
Derm	Dermatology
diag.	diagnosis
dil.	dilute
disch.	discharge
DL	danger list
DOA	dead on arrival
DPT	diphtheria toxoid, pertussis vaccine, tetanus toxoid
dsg.	dressing
Dx.	diagnosis

E

EBL	estimated blood loss
ECG	electrocardiogram (EKG may be preferred for legibility)

ECT	electroconvulsive
ECHO virus	enterocyttopathogenic human orphan viruses
EDC	estimated date of confinement
EEG	electroencephalogram
elix.	elixir
ENT	ears, nose & throat or ear, nose & throat
EOM	extraocular movement
epith.	epithelium or epithelial
ER (ED)	emergency room (department)
EST	electroshock therapy
expir.	expiration or expiratory
ext.	extract

F

#	fracture
F.	Fahrenheit (98.6 F)
fam.doc.	family doctor (no longer accepted)
	family phys.
	family physician
	referring doctor
FBS	fasting blood sugar
Fe	iron

FETAL POSITION PRESENTATION

LFA (RFA)	left frontoanterior (right)
LFP (RFP)	left frontoposterior (right)
LFT (RFT)	left frontotransverse (right)
LMA (RMA)	left mentoanterior (right)
LMP (RMP)	left mentoposterior (right)
LMT (RMT)	left metrotransverse (right)
LOA	left occiput anterior
LOP	left occiput posterior
LOT	left occiput transverse
LSA (RSA)	left sacrum anterior (right)
LSP (RSP)	left sacrum posterior (right)
LST (RST)	left sacrum transverse (right)
ROA	right occiput anterior
ROP	right occiput posterior
ROT	right occiput transverse
FH	family history
Fld	fluid

for. body	foreign body
fract.	fracture
FSH	follicle stimulating hormone

G

gal.	gallon
GI	gastrointestinal
gm or g	gram (measurement)
Gml	grams per hundred milliliters of serum or blood as specified
gold.sol.	colloidal gold curve
GPR	glomerular filtration rate
gr.	grain (measurement used in medicine)
Grav.I, Grav. II	primigravide, secundigravida indicating a woman of so many pregnancies.
Gtt	drop (measurement used in medicine)
GU	genitourinary
Gyn.	gynecology

H

H	hour
H&H	hemoglobin & hematocrit
H.I.	head injuries
h.s.	hour of sleep, bed time
H.S.	at bed time
H/O	history of
HAA	hepatitis associated antigen
Hct.	hematocrit
Hgb	hemoglobin
Hi. cal	high calory
Hint.	Hinton
Hi	vit high vitamin
HOB	head of bead
hpf.	per high powered field (used only in describing urine sediments)
ht	height

I

I ¹³¹	radioactive iodine
I&D	incision and drainage (included because of general use)

I&Q	intake and output (I&O)
IM	intramuscular
incr.	increased or increasing
inspr.	Inspiration or inspiratory
IPPB	intermittent positive pressure breathing
IQ	intelligence quotient
Irrig.	irrigation
IUD	intrauterine device
IV	intravenous
IVP	intravenous pyelogram

J

JVD	jugular vein distention
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K

K	potassium
Kg	kilogram
KJ	knee jerk
KUB	kidney, ureter, and bladder

L

L or lt.	left (sometimes it is light,when describing colors)
I & W	living and well
Lab.	laboratory
lap.	laparotomy
lat.	lateral
lb.	pound
LBBB	left bundle branch block
LDH	lactic acid dehydragenase
liq.	Liquid
L	left
LMP	last menstrual period
lot.	lotion
LP	lumbar puncture
LSD	lysergic diethylamide
LUL	left upper lobe (lung)
LUQ	left upper quadrant
LUQ	left upper quadrant (abdomen)
lymphs	lymphocytes
LLL	left lower lobe (lung)

LLQ left lower quadrant
LLQ left lower quadrant (abdomen)

M

m. minus
M₁ mitral first
MCH mean corpuscular hemoglobin
MCHC mean corpuscular hemoglobin concentration
MCV mean corpuscular volume
Mg. magnesium
mg. % milligrams per hundred milliliters of serum blood
Meq (Meq/l) milliequivalents (per liter)
M. et N. morning and night
Mn. manganese
med. medicine
mixt. mixture
mg. milligram
mid. middle
min. minute
ml. milliliter
mm. millimeter
mod. moderate
mono monocyte

N

Na. sodium
NAD nothing abnormal detected
N+V nausea & vomiting
neg. negative
neuro. Neurology or neurological
no. number
noc. night
noct. nocturnal
non. rep do not repeat
NPN nonprotein nitrogen
NPO nothing by mouth
NS neurosurgery
#, No. number

O

O₂ oxygen
o.d. right eye

o.s.	left eye
O ₂	oxygen capacity
O ₂ sat	oxygen saturation
OB/GYN	obstetrics & gynecology
obs.	Obstetrics or obstetrical
Occ. th.	occupational therapy
ol.	oil
OO	right eye
op.	operation
OR.	operating room
orth	orthopedic
OT	old tuberculin
ou.	both eyes
oz.	ounce

P

p	after
p	pulse
P	phosphorus
P ₂	pulmonic second heart sound
P ₃₂	radioactive phosphorus
Para I, Para II	primipara, secundipara (indicating a woman of so many children)
paracent	paracentesis
PBI	protein bound iodine
p.c.	(Latin: post cibum) after meals
PE	physical examination
Peds.	Pediatrics
PELVIC MEASUREMENTS:	
ant.	anterior
Post. Sag. D.	posterior sagittal diameter
A.P.D.	anteroposterior diameter
bisp.	bispinous or interspinous diameter
DC	diagonal conjugate
IT	intertuberous
OC	obstetrical conjugate
Tans. D.	transverse diameter
percuss. & AUSC. &	percussion and auscultation. "P & A "is disparaged)
p.r.	per rectum
p.r.n.	(Latin: pro re nata) as often as necessary

P ₄	hydrogen ion concentration
per	through or by
peri. care	perineal care
PERRLA	pupils equal, round reactive to light and accommodation
PH	Past History
Phys. Th.	Physical Therapy
PI	present illness
pk.	dissociation constant
PKU	phenylketonuria
PM	afternoon, evening (after 12 noon)
PMI	point of maximal impulse
po	(Latin: per os) by mouth
polyps.	polymorphonuclear leucocytes
POMR	patient oriented medical record
Pop. smear	Papanicolaus smear test
poplit.	popliteal
Post op	postoperative
Pre op	preoperative
prep.	prepare for
prn	when necessary (total protein is preferred when referring to a clinical determination of the protein of the blood.)
prot. protein	
prothr. cont.	prothrombin content
prothr. time.	prothrombin time
PSP	phenosulfonphthallein
psych	psychological
PT	physical therapy
pt.	patient
pulv.	powder
PZI	protamine zinc insulin

Q

q	every
q.s	quantity sufficient
q.d.	every day
q.h.	every hour
q.i.d	every other day
q.o.d.	every other day
qt.	quart
q2h.	(Latin: quaque duo hora) every two hours

q3h	(Latin: quaque tres horas) every three hours
q4h	(Latin: quaque quatuor hora) every four hours
q.(4) i.d	(Latin: quatuor in die) four times a day
q.n.	(Latin: quaque nocte) every night
q.n.s.	(Latin: quantume non statis) quantity not sufficient
quant.	quantitative or quantity

R

R/ rt.	right
r/resp.	respiration
RBC	red blood cell
rbc.	red blood cell
Rh	Rhesus blood factor
RLQ	right lower quadrant
RLL	right lower lobe (lung)
RML	right middle lobe (lung)
RRE	round, regular and equal
RUL	right upper lobe (lung)
RUQ	right upper quadrant
RUQ	right upper quadrant (abdomen)
Rx.	therapy

S

S.O.S	(Latin: si opus sit) may be repeated once if urgently required
s.s.	enema, soapsuds enema
s	without
sang.	sanguineous
sat.	saturated
sed. rate	erythrocyte sedimentation
SGOT	serum glutamic pyruvic transaminase
SGPT	serum glutamic oxalvacetic transaminase
SH	Social History
sig.	Label or write on label
SOB	short of breath
Sol.	solution (s)
ss.	one half
sp.gr.	specific gravity
S.R.	system review
spec.	specimen
SQ (SC)	subcutaneous

ss	one half
Staph	staphylococcus
stat	(Latin: statim) immediately and once only
stillb	stillborn or still birth
strep.	streptococcus
STS	serologic list for syphilis
Subcut. or	subcutaneous
subs.	
subling	under the tongue, sublingual
Surg, or	Surgery or surgical
surg.	
SW	stomach washout
Sx	symptoms
sympat.	sympathetic
sympt.	Symptom
syr.	syrup

T

t.i.d	three times a day
tab.	tablet
tap.	teaspoon
tbc.	tuberculosis
tbsp.	tablespoon
tint. or tr.	tincture
TLC	tender loving care
TPR	temperature, pulse & respiration
TSH	thyroid stimulating hormone
Tx	treatment

U

U	unit
U/A	urine analysis
ung.	ointment
URI	upper respiratory infection (included because of general use)
Urol. or rural	Urology or urological
UTI	urinary tract infection

V

vag.	vaginal
VC or Vit	vital capacity
VD	venereal disease
VDRL (test)	venereal disease reasearch laboratory test

Via	by way of
Vit.	Vitamin when followed by specific letter, i.e. Vit. C
vo	verbal order

W

w.a.	while awake
Wass	Wassermann
WBC	white blood count
Wbc	white blood cell
WD or WN	well developed, well nourished
Wt	weight

Notes: w/ and w/o are “with” and “without” in everyday English. Common people would not recognize c, s.

RESUMEN

El uso de abreviaturas como proceso de construcción de palabras se ha vuelto muy productivo en el Inglés actual. Las abreviaciones también han encontrado un camino para la comunicación profesional y rápida. Los principales objetivos de este artículo, son proporcionar algunas oportunidades prácticas para brindar a los que aprenden oportunidades de familiarizarse y practicar abreviaturas de una forma eficaz y comunicativa, y proporcionar un glosario de las abreviaturas utilizadas más frecuentemente por las enfermeras.

DeCS: ABREVIATURAS; COMUNICACION; INSTRUCCION PARA ENFERMERAS [TIPO DE PUBLICACION]

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