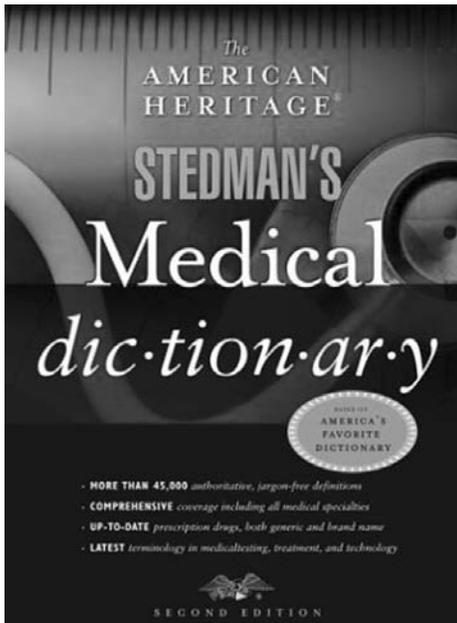


edited by Beth Notzon and Edith Paal



THE AMERICAN HERITAGE STEDMAN'S MEDICAL DICTIONARY, SECOND EDITION. BOSTON, NEW YORK: HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY; 2004. XXXII + 909 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$27.00. ISBN 0-618-42899-2.

If you're editing a manuscript on prophylactic surgery and need to check the meaning of *oophorectomy*, if you're watching a news story on recent drugs used to treat Parkinson disease and can't remember its symptoms, or if you need to know the definitions of *healthy* and *healthful* and how they differ, you can find your answers in *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary*.

Now in its second edition, *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary* merges two respected publications to create a useful reference tool for homes, public libraries, and medical writers and editors. The editors at *American Heritage* aim to make *Stedman's* accessible to users who may not have a medical background by providing what they call "jargon-free definitions" of medical terms. This publication might also appeal to those with a medical background who need concise, straightforward definitions.

According to its publishers, *The American Heritage Stedman's* has 45,000 definitions—more than *Webster's New World Medical Dictionary* (8000 terms) and *The New American Medical Dictionary and Health Manual* (10,000 terms), which are also works that provide concise definitions. It even has a greater number of entries than some dictionaries with more in-depth definitions, such as *Black's Medical Dictionary* (5000 terms) and *Melloni's Illustrated Medical Dictionary* (30,000 terms). Of course, being a concise dictionary, it has nowhere near the 102,000 terms that the full-sized illustrated *Stedman's Medical Dictionary* does or the 123,000 terms of *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary*.

Entries cover a wide array of terms, such as group therapy, HDL, love handle, moron, Nicorette, New Hampshire rule, opposer muscle of the little finger, peptide bond, and potassium-40. Although entries do not provide subheads, they do include pronunciations and part-of-speech labels. The average entry is about three to four lines long; the longest definition I found was 11 lines long.

Medical terminology uses many abbreviations, so it is helpful that this dictionary defines them. For example, the entry for BMR indicates that the term is an abbrevia-

tion for "basal metabolic rate"; its definition is then provided under basal metabolic rate. Abbreviations about health-care management and policy—such as HMO, PCP, and PPO—are included as well.

Both generic and trademarked drug names (such as acetaminophen, Benadryl, Pepto-Bismol, ranitidine, and Valtrex) are included, but full definitions are provided under the generic names. For instance, Tums is defined as "a trademark for an over-the-counter preparation of calcium carbonate"; a user must then look up calcium carbonate to learn that it is "a calcium salt used as a dietary supplement and as an antacid".

Thus, although the dictionary is user-friendly, one may look up a term only to have to look up another unfamiliar word used in the definition. This often occurs in reference works but is perhaps especially notable in a dictionary that claims to be free of jargon. For example, the definition of passive anaphylaxis states that it is "an anaphylactic response . . .", causing some users to have to look up anaphylactic. In another instance, keratocyte is defined as "a fibroblastic stromal cell of the cornea". Depending on a user's level of knowledge, he or she may then have to look up fibroblastic, stromal, or cornea. Thus, the claims to provide jargon-free definitions are sometimes undermined by the inherent difficulties of explaining medical terms without drawing on a technical vocabulary.

To illustrate select definitions, this volume is sprinkled with more than 80 black-and-white line drawings for such terms as asthma, biopsy, brain, cerebral embolism, diaphragm, DNA, forceps, enzyme, endocrine system, joint, lung, polyp, mitosis, and mitochondrion. Also featured are more than 400 short biographic entries on such people as British anatomist Henry Gray and American biochemist Stanley Cohen.

Introductory materials feature a guide to the dictionary, a pronunciation key, and a compound-word index. The appendixes include a measurement chart, a metric-conversion chart, recommended daily allowances of vitamins and minerals, and a periodic table of the elements. The appendixes also provide

black-and-white illustrations of skeletal muscles, the skeleton, the vascular system, and the nervous system. However, the back matter of *The American Heritage Stedman's* is not as rich as that in more technical dictionaries geared toward specialists or that in some other jargon-free dictionaries, which provide such information as basic first-aid treatment; guides to symptoms, diseases, and pharmaceuticals; and lists of medical roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

The 11 thumb tabs facilitate the finding of words, and the font is large enough to make reading easy. Unlike some medical dictionaries, this book isn't too heavy (only 3 lb) and can be easily carried with one hand. (The full-sized *Stedman's* weighs 6.6 lb and *Dorland's* more than 8.5 lb.)

Although some medical professionals may want a dictionary with more in-depth defini-

tions and reference materials, *The American Heritage Stedman's* will, for the most part, meet the needs of those with or without a medical background who are searching for a concise dictionary. If you want a six-line definition of *heart* accompanied by one black-and-white line drawing, this is the reference tool for you. If you're looking for a more substantial definition, many subheads, and more detailed drawings, try *Dorland's* or the full-sized *Stedman's*.

Martha Morrison

MARTHA MORRISON is an associate scientific editor in the Department of Scientific Publications at the University of Texas M D Anderson Cancer Center.

Book Notes

EVOLVING EDEN: AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO THE EVOLUTION OF THE AFRICAN LARGE-MAMMAL FAUNA. ALAN TURNER AND MAURICIO ANTON. NEW YORK: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2004. XVIII + 269 PAGES. HARDCOVER. \$39.50. ISBN 0-231-11944-5.

Evolving Eden, although written for the lay reader, is not for the reader with only a passing interest in the animal evolution of Africa, but for the person with a serious desire for in-depth knowledge of the history of mammalian evolution in Africa as it played out over the last 65 million years, when mammals came into their own, so to speak, with the disappearance of the dinosaurs. As the authors note in the epilogue, the mammals of Africa are an important focus of paleontology because "Africa is one of the richest biotic regions on Earth, a zoogeographic realm in itself, with around one-quarter of all the living species of mammals and a vast array of plants"—a veritable Garden of Eden and thus the inspiration for the title of the book. The impetus for the book was the new information about mammalian evolution revealed with new technology—but not DNA technology. The fossil record remains the most reliable source of information about animal evolution in Africa.

The first two chapters of the book are excellent overviews of the geographic and climatic changes that occurred in Africa over the past 3.5 billion years and that served as a backdrop for mammalian evolution. The third chapter constitutes the bulk of the book. It is devoted to "an outline of each of the orders of large terrestrial mammals known from Africa and the range of species assigned to the various families". The final chapter is probably the most important; it must be read for the book to achieve its aim, which is to provide a three-dimensional look (a synthesis) at prehistoric African wildlife that takes into account the range of animals, the climate, the geography, and the habitat at particular times, starting 30 million years ago. Attractively designed and beautifully illustrated by one of the authors (Mauricio Anton), the book is written in a very engaging style that is also solidly scientific in content.

Beth Notzon

BETH NOTZON is a scientific publications manager at the University of Texas M D Anderson Cancer Center.