

it” but which were used by the Stoic philosophers to refer to the spirit or animating breath by which God works in and over all things, ordering them, breathing life into them, and directing them. Other derivatives from *pneo* are πνευματικός (*pneumatikos*), relating to wind or spirit; πνευμῶν (*pneumon*), referring to the lung; πνευστες (*pneustes*), denoting a person who breathes hard or an asthmatic person; and πνοια (*pnoia*), interpreted as breathing. Secondary Greek derivations are πνευμονια (*pneumonia*), απνοια (*apnea*), and δυοπνοια (*dyspnea*), among others. In modern times, Leibnitz introduced the term *pneumatology*, which is a compound of *pneuma* and λογος (*logos*; also from the Greek, meaning “reason,” “knowledge,” “word”) to denote knowledge of God, souls, and basic substances in general.^{2,3}

In light of all this, although the lack of distinction in present-day medical vocabulary between *pneuma* and *pneumata* to refer to air does seem appropriate, such is not the case when extended to mean “lung,” for which *pneumon* seems more correct. Thus *pneumothorax*, *pneumomediastinum*, *pneumoperitoneum*, for example, mean air in the thorax, mediastinum, and peritoneum, respectively. For the same reason, *pneumectomy*, which is a compound of *pneumo* and τομος (*tomos*, a cut section), means literally “excision of air.” Cooper gives the term this meaning when he writes “bilateral pneumectomy” in his highly celebrated first publication on lung volume reduction surgery, thus emphasizing the fact that what is excised is precisely air, not lung.⁴ To refer to excision of lung tissue we consider *neumonectomia* (pneumonectomy) the correct term in Spanish. Likewise, in referring to the study of the lungs, *pneumonologia* in Spanish and *pneumonology* in English, seem accurate to us since the exact meaning of *pneumology* is the study of air. Such malapropism is perhaps as serious as it would be not to distinguish between *gastrology*, *gastro-nomy*, and *astronomy*. Terms derived from *pnoia* (“breathing”), such as *apnea*, *dyspnea*, and *orthopnea* are semantically accurate. Accordingly, to denote the study of respiration we propose the term *pnealología* in Spanish—a neologism we are coining. *Pnealología* has the necessary semantic precision, since *logos* for the ancient Greeks comprised the concepts of both knowledge and word. Even more, as our contemporary, Heidegger, said, “The word designates a mode of Being.”

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Etymologies

To the Editor: With great interest and satisfaction we read the letter by Maldonado et al¹ concerning the generalized use of the terms *lobar* and *lobectomy*—incorrect in the authors’ opinion. They defended *lobular* and *lobulectomy* as correct alternatives, based on etymological and semantic arguments.¹ We would like to take advantage of this occasion to discuss an extension of this problem—that is, lack of etymological and thus semantic rigor—to other terms commonly used in our specialty.

The root of the present case in point lies in the Greek word πνεο (*pneo*), which means “I take a deep breath” or “I breathe” and from which are derived πνευμα, πνευματος (*pneuma*, *pneumatós*), whose common meanings were “deep breath,” “breath,” and “spir-

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3. Quintana JM. Raíces griegas del léxico castellano científico y médico. Madrid: Dykinson; 1987.
4. Cooper JD, Trulock EP, Triantafilou AN, et al. Bilateral pneumectomy (volume reduction) for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg. 1995;109:106-16.