How to stress medical terminology


1. Every word in isolation must have one **primary stress.** In longer words there may be a **secondary stress,** which usually falls 2 syllables before the primary stress:

'leu co'penia, in semi'nation, mi cro'scopic, psycho'logical

2. In general the stress is on the root of the word:

di'sorder, bi'lateral, con'genital, 'tu'bul'eu, re'gult, in'hibit, ex'cre'te, 'mem'brane, 'fail'ure

Note that prefixes are usually weak as are Anglo-Saxon endings:

'King dom, 'scholar'ship, 'hand'some, 'hol'iness etc.

3. Certain Romance suffixes fix the stress in whatever word they are added to. The most frequent of these stress-fixing suffixes are the following:

-ic:

-fixes the stress on the preceding syllable:
Ped'i'atric, ortho'pedic, antibi'otic, nep'hri'tic, hyper'dermic

-There are only 8 common exceptions:
'ca'tolic, 'he'retic, 'lu'natic, 'ar'senic, 'pol'itics, a'ri'tmetic, 'Ar'abic, 'rhe'toric

-ion:

-also fixes the stress on the preceding syllable:
contra'ception, gest'ation, re'action, ab'lation, dimi'nution, per'fusion

but this is only a particular case of a much more general rule:

**Suffixes of the form: "."i / u + vowel" fix the stress on the preceding syllable:**

-ia: anaes'thesia, septi'caemia, claustro'phobia, dys'lexia

-ian: phy'sician, ma'gician, l"italian

-ial: 'radial, po'tential, myo'cardial, arti'ficial, differ'ential

-ious: sus'picious, un'conscious, am'phibious, ma'larious

-ior: an'terior, in'ferior, ex'terior

-ient: de'ficient, pro'ficient, im'patient, convenien't

-ual: 'gradual, per'petual, con'tinual, re'sidual

-uous: am'biguous, im'petuous, con'spicuous

-ium: po'tassium, bac'terium, epi'thelium, de'li'rium

-ity fixes the stress on the preceding syllable:

'quantity, e'quality, de'formity

But this is again only a particular case of a general rule:
4. Nouns (mainly abstracts) in -y have antepenultimate stress (third syllable from the end):
insufficiency, 'dysentery, ma'lignancy, gynae'cology, radi'o'graphy, ac'cessory, va'sectomy, 'therapy, osteo-ar'thopathy, lapa'roscopy, lo'botomy, co'lostomy.

A notable exception to this rule is the ending-plasty, which is stressed:
orcheo'plasty, rhino'plasty, mammo'plasty etc...

-itis, -osis, -esis are also stressed:
derma'titis, cirr'hosis, amniocen'tesis

4. These rules fixing the stress according to the suffix cause the position of stress in a word to change in its derived form.

In the following table the words in column 2 have weak endings and keep the same stress as the root forms of column 1. In the 3rd and 4th columns, the words have stress-fixing suffixes with displacement of the stress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'physics</td>
<td>'physical(ly)</td>
<td>phy'sician</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'person</td>
<td>'personal(ly)</td>
<td>per'sonify</td>
<td>perso'nality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'photograph</td>
<td>pho'tography</td>
<td>photo'graphic(ally)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'democrat</td>
<td>de'mocracy</td>
<td>demo'cratic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'maths,</td>
<td>mathe'matics</td>
<td>mathe'matician</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'regular</td>
<td>'regularly</td>
<td>regu'larity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'grammar</td>
<td>gram'marian</td>
<td>grammati'cality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>con'tinue</td>
<td>con'tinuous</td>
<td>conti'nuity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Exercise: Mark the stress in the following words
conscientious, arthritic, claustrphobia, endoscopy, meningitis,
orthopedic, deficient, intellectual, arteriosclerosis, hyperdermic,
inoculation, hemiplegia, arsenic, epithelium, enterocentesis,
psychological, deciduous, malarious, orchioplasty, urography, proficient,
delirium, amniotic, dermatitis, inflammation, necrosis, impetuous,
superior, lunatic, gestation, lobotomy; anti-diuretic, conjunctivoplasty
transfusion, physician.