

McLaren Health Care Corporation
Human Research Protections Program

Alternative Lay Language for Medical Terms in Informed Consent Forms

This glossary is intended to provide some more commonly understood terms for the “medical jargon” that might be found in consent forms.

A	
abdomen	belly, stomach
abdominal distention	bloating
absorb	take up fluids, take in
acid taste	sour taste
acidosis	condition when blood contains more acid than normal
acuity	clearness, keenness, esp. of vision and airways
acute	new, recent, sudden, urgent
acute cholecystitis	gall stones, which may cause upper abdominal pain and require hospitalization and surgery
Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)	Cancer of bone marrow cells (See also Myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS))
adenopathy	swollen lymph nodes (glands)
adjuvant	helpful, assisting, aiding, supportive
adjuvant treatment	added treatment (usually to a standard treatment)
adverse effect	side effect, bad reaction, unwanted response
agent	drug, medication
albumin	protein found in blood
allergic reaction	rash, hives, swelling, trouble breathing
alopecia	loss of hair
ambulate/ambulation/ambulatory	walk, able to walk
analgesic	pain-relieving drug
anaphylaxis	serious, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction
anasarca	build up of fluid throughout the whole body, which occurs in severely ill people
anemia	low number of red blood cells, can causes tiredness and shortness of breath. May require a blood transfusion
anesthetic	a drug or agent used to decrease the feeling of pain, or eliminate the feeling of pain by putting you to sleep
angina	chest pain due to decreased oxygen getting to the heart.
angina pectoris	pain resulting from not enough blood flowing to the heart
anorexia	lack of appetite
antecubital	related to the inner side of the forearm
antibody	protein made in the body in response to foreign substance
antibiotic	drug that kills bacteria and other germs
anticonvulsant	drug used to prevent seizures
antiemetic	medication to prevent nausea/vomiting
antilipemic	a drug that lowers fat levels in the blood
antimicrobial	drug that kills bacteria and other germs
antiretroviral	drug that works against the growth of certain viruses
antitussive	a drug used to relieve coughing
aplastic anemia	a disorder caused by decreased production of red blood cells
approximately	about
arrhythmia	irregular heart beat; any change from the normal heartbeat
arterial thrombosis	blood clot in an artery that blocks the artery. This could be serious and life threatening

arterial catheter	small tube placed in an artery
arthralgia	joint pain
ascites	build up of fluid in the abdomen, which causes bloating and discomfort. This could require that the fluid be removed by a procedure called paracentesis
aspiration	fluid entering the lungs, such as after vomiting
assay	lab test
assess	to learn about, measure, evaluate, look at
asthenia	feeling weak and having no energy
asthma	lung disease associated with tightening of air passages, making breathing difficult
asymptomatic	without symptoms
autoimmune enteritis	This is when your immune system attacks normal cells in your body, including the cells that line your digestive tract. This may result in bleeding and inflammation of the esophagus, bowel (intestines), and lower gi tract (colon), which can cause bleeding, diarrhea and perforations (holes). This could be serious or life threatening. Hospitalization and treatment with medications (steroids) may be necessary. This can become severe and may require surgical removal of parts of the intestines or colon. These surgical procedures might result in your having a stoma (hole) though which digested food passes
autoimmune hemolytic anemia	Destruction of red blood cells by a person's own immune system
axilla	armpit
B	
baseline	1. Information gathered at the beginning of a study from which variations found in the study are measured. 2. A known value or quantity with which an unknown is compared when measured or assessed. 3. The initial time point in a clinical trial, just before a participant starts to receive the experimental treatment which is being tested. At this reference point, measurable values such as cd4 count are recorded. Safety and efficacy of a drug are often determined by monitoring changes from the baseline values.
benefit	a valued or desired outcome; an advantage
benign	not malignant, without serious consequences
BID	twice a day
bilirubinemia	high levels of bilirubin in the blood
bioavailability	the extent to which a drug or other substance becomes available to the body
binding / bound	carried by, to make stick together, transported
bioavailability	the extent to which a drug or other substance becomes available to the body
biologic	any therapeutic serum, toxin, anti-toxin, or analogous microbial product applicable to the prevention, treatment, or cure of diseases or injuries
biopsy	removal and examination of tissue
blind	a randomized trial is "blind" if the participant is not told which arm of the trial he is on
bolus	a large amount given all at once
bone mass	the amount of calcium and other minerals in a given amount of bone
bowel perforation	perforation of the digestive system
bradycardia	slow heartbeat
brain stem edema	accumulation of fluid around the brain stem, this can be life threatening
bronchospasm	breathing distress caused by narrowing of the airways

C	
carcinogenic	cancer-causing
carcinoma	type of cancer
cardiac	related to the heart
cardiac arrest	sudden, unexpected stopping of the heart.
cardiac effusion	collection of fluid around the heart
cardiac toxicity	damage to the heart
cardiomyopathy	heart muscle becomes damaged and the heart doesn't pump properly
cardiovascular	heart and blood vessels
cardioversion	return to normal heartbeat by electric shock
case study	a research strategy that focuses on one case (an individual, a group, an organization etc.) within its social context during one time period
catheter	a tube for withdrawing or giving fluids
central nervous system (CNS)	brain and spinal cord
cerebral trauma	damage to the brain
cessation	stopping
CHD	coronary heart disease
chemotherapy	treatment of disease, usually cancer, by chemical agents
chronic	continuing for a long time, ongoing
clinical	pertaining to medical care
clinical trial	a type of research study
cluster sample	a probability sample that is determined by randomly selecting clusters of people from a population and subsequently selecting every person in each cluster for inclusion in the sample
cognitively impaired	having either a psychiatric disorder (e.g., psychosis, neurosis, personality or behavior disorders, or dementia) or a developmental disorder (e.g., mental retardation) that affects cognitive or emotional functions to the extent that capacity for judgment and reasoning is significantly diminished
cohort	a group of subjects initially identified as having one or more characteristics in common who are followed over time
coma	unconscious state
compassionate use	providing experimental therapy prior to final FDA approval for use in humans
compensation	payment or medical care provided to subjects injured in research; does not refer to payment (remuneration) for participation in research
competence	a legal term to indicate a person's capacity to act on one's own behalf; a person's ability to understand information presented, to realize the consequences of acting (or not acting) on that information, and to make a choice.
complete response	total disappearance of disease
confounding factor	any factor that might serve as an alternative explanation for a study's result; confounding factors include non-randomized samples, selection bias, and any arbitrary differences between people that are being compared.
congenital	present before birth
conjunctivitis	redness and irritation of the thin membrane that covers the eye
consolidation phase	treatment phase intended to make a remission permanent (follows induction phase)
constipation	difficulty passing stools
contract	an agreement
contraindicated	disadvantageous, perhaps dangerous; a treatment that should not be used in certain individuals or conditions due to risks. For instance, a drug may be contraindicated for pregnant women and people with high blood pressure

control group	in many clinical trials, one group of patients will be given an experimental drug or treatment, while the control group is given either a standard treatment for the illness or a placebo
controlled trial	research study in which the experimental treatment or procedure is compared to a standard (control) treatment or procedure
convenience sample	a non-probability sample that is determined by selecting participants that are readily accessible (convenient) to the researcher, (examples in studies of Stanford students might include going to an organizational meeting or hanging out outside of rastall and asking students exiting the lunchroom to take a survey)
cooperative group	association of multiple institutions to perform clinical trials
coronary	related to the blood vessels that supply the heart, or to the heart itself
CT scan (CAT scan)	computerized series of x-rays
cross-over design	a type of clinical trial in which each subject experiences, at different times, both the experimental and control therapy
culture	test for infection, or for organisms that could cause infection
cumulative	added together from the beginning
cutaneous	relating to the skin
CVA	stroke
D	
debilitation	weakened condition
dehydrate	lose water or body fluids
dermatitis	skin irritation, rash
dermatologic	pertaining to the skin
deteriorate	condition to grow worse
diarrhea	frequent, loose watery stools, which can cause dehydration and may require hospitalization and treatment with intravenous fluids
diastolic	lower number in a blood pressure reading
distal	toward the end, away from the center of the body
distal parathesias	numbness and tingling in the hands and feet.
diuretic	water pill or drug that causes increase in urination
doppler	device using sound waves to diagnose or test
double-blind design	study in which neither investigators nor subjects know what drug or treatment the subject is receiving
duration	length of time involved
dysplasia	abnormal cells
E	
echocardiogram	using sound waves for examination of the heart
edema	build up of fluid in the body causing swelling.
EEG	electric brain wave tracing
efficacy	effectiveness
electrocardiogram	electrical tracing of the heartbeat (ECG or EKG)
electrolyte changes	an imbalance of minerals in the blood; changes in electrolytes (body salts), which usually do not cause any symptoms but that can sometimes cause fatigue, muscle weakness, cramping, rigidity, irregular heart beat, or seizures
elevated lipase, amylase	may indicate inflammation of the pancreas, which could result in abdominal pain and discomfort and could require hospitalization and intravenous treatment
elevated uric acid levels	may worsen kidney function; cause joint pain (gout) and kidney stones
emesis	vomiting, throwing up
empirical	based on experimental data, not on a theory.
encephalopathy	disease of the brain that severely alters thinking.
endoscopic examination	examination of an internal part of the body with a lighted tube
endpoint	overall outcome that the protocol is designed to evaluate

enteral	by way of the intestines
enzyme	a chemical in the blood that causes chemical changes
epidemiology	The branch of medical science that deals with the study of incidence and distribution and control of a disease in a population.
epidural	outside the spinal cord
epistaxis	bloody nose
erythema	redness of the skin
evaluated, assessed	examined for a medical condition
excrete	discharge, pass
expanded access	refers to any of the FDA procedures, such as compassionate use, parallel track, and treatment IND that distribute experimental drugs to participants who are failing on currently available treatments for their condition and also are unable to participate in ongoing clinical trials
experimental drug	a drug that is not FDA licensed for use in humans, or as a treatment for a particular condition
experimental group	the group in an experimental design study that receives treatment in the form, or in various forms, of the independent variable
external	outside the body
extravasate	to leak outside of a planned area, such as out of a blood vessel
F	
fatigue	feeling tired
fetus	unborn baby
fever	abnormally high body temperature
fibrillation	irregular beat of the heart or other muscle
fibrosis	scars
fibrous	having many fibers, such as scar tissue
fluoroscope	x-ray machine
fungus	form of infection
G	
gait	walk
gastrointestinal	stomach and intestines
general anesthesia	pain prevention by giving drugs to cause loss of consciousness, as during surgery
genetic screening	tests to identify persons who have an inherited predisposition to a certain phenotype or who are at risk of producing offspring with inherited diseases or disorders
genotype	the genetic makeup of an individual
gestational	pertaining to pregnancy
H	
headache	pain in the head
heart palpitations	heart beats that are fast and hard
hematocrit	amount of red blood cells in the blood
hematoma	blood clot
hematuria	blood in urine
Hemodynamic measuring	measuring of blood flow
hemolysis	breakdown in red blood cells
hemolytic uremic syndrome	red blood cells begin to dissolve, which leave wastes in the blood and the kidneys are unable to get rid of excess fluid and wastes
hemoptysis	vomiting blood
hemorrhage	loss of blood (heavy bleeding)
hemorrhagic cystitis	inflammation of the bladder with severe bleeding
heparin lock	needle placed in the arm with blood thinner to keep the blood from clotting
hepatoma	cancer or tumor of the liver

heritable disease	disease that can be transmitted to one's offspring, resulting in damage to future children
high thyroid function	may cause fatigue, weight loss, rapid heartbeat, sweating, trouble with heat, nervousness
histopathologic	pertaining to the disease status of body tissues or cells
holter monitor	a portable machine for recording heart beats
hormone	a chemical in the body
hypercalcemia	high levels of calcium in the blood
hyperkalemia	high levels of potassium in the blood, which can cause the heart to stop beating
hyperkeratosis	thickening of the skin, nails.
hyponatremia	high blood sodium level
hyperpigmentation	darkening of the skin
hyperpyrexia	high body temperature, a fever.
hypertension	high blood pressure
hyperuricemia	excess amount of uric acid in the blood, gout, which can cause pain in the joints
hypokalemia	decreased levels of potassium in the blood, which can cause irregular heart beat
hypomagnesemia	low magnesium, which may result in muscle cramps, weakness, tremors or irregular heartbeat
hyponatremia	decreased levels of sodium in the blood, which can cause confusion, seizures, fatigue and low levels of consciousness
hypophosphatemia	low phosphate, which may result in muscle weakness, bone pain, confusion and muscle breakdown
hypopigmentation / vitiligo	patches of the skin turn lighter than the surrounding skin
hypotensive	low blood pressure
hypoxemia	a decrease of oxygen in the blood
hypoxia	a decrease of oxygen reaching body tissues
hysterectomy	surgical removal of the uterus, ovaries (female sex glands), or both uterus and ovaries
I	
iatrogenic	caused by a physician or by treatment
idiopathic	of unknown cause
immunity	defense against, protection from
immunization	administration of a substance to prevent disease
immunoglobulin	a protein that makes antibodies
immunological effects	effect on the immune system
immunosuppressive	drug which works against the body's immune (protective) response, often used in transplantation and diseases caused by immune system malfunction
immunotherapy	giving of drugs to help the body's immune (protective) system; usually used to destroy cancer cells
Impaired function	abnormal function
implanted	placed in the body
induction	Start the initial treatment of <i>disease name</i>
induration	hardening
indwelling	remaining in a given location, such as a catheter
infarct	death of tissue due to lack of blood supply
infectious disease	disease that is transmitted from one person to the next
inflammation	Swelling that is generally red, warm, and painful
infusion	slow injection of a substance into the body, usually into the blood by means of a catheter
ingestion	eating; taking by mouth
insomnia	inability to sleep

interferon	drug which acts against viruses; antiviral agent
intermittent	occurring (regularly or irregularly) between two time points; repeatedly stopping, then starting again
internal	within the body
interstitial pneumonitis, pneumonitis	inflammation of the lungs, which can cause shortness of breath and difficulty breathing
intramuscular	into the muscle; within the muscle
intraperitoneal	into the abdominal cavity
intrathecal	into the spinal fluid
intravenous (IV)	through the vein
intravesical	in the bladder
intubate	the placement of a tube into the airway
Investigational	the study drug [device or biologic] is still being tested in research studies and is not approved for this use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
irradiation	x-ray
ischemia	decreased oxygen in a tissue (usually because of decreased blood flow)
J	
jaundice	yellowing of the skin
L	
laparotomy	Surgical procedure in which an incision is made in the abdominal wall so the doctor can look at the organs inside.
Lesion	wound or injury; a diseased patch of skin
lethargy	sleepiness, tiredness
leukopenia	low white blood cell count
lipid	fat
lipid profile	fat and cholesterol levels in the blood
localized	limited to one area
low blood sugar / hypoglycemia	abnormal decrease in sugar in the blood, which can cause weakness, fatigue, and if severe, can cause loss of consciousness
low thyroid function	may cause fatigue, weight gain, fluid retention, feeling cold, decreased cognitive function
low white cell count	increased risk of infection
lumen	the cavity of an organ or tube (e.g., blood vessel)
lymphangiography	an x-ray of the lymph nodes or tissues after injecting dye into lymph vessels (e.g., in feet)
lymphocyte	a type of white blood cell important in immunity (protection) against infection
lymphoma	a cancer of the lymph nodes (or tissues)
M	
maintenance	the continued long term control of the <i>disease</i>
malaise	a vague feeling of bodily discomfort, feeling badly
malfunction	condition in which something is not functioning properly
malignancy	cancer or other progressively enlarging and spreading tumor, usually fatal if not successfully treated
medullablastoma	a type of brain tumor
megaloblastosis	change in red blood cells
metabolic acidosis	the body becomes more acid
metabolism	chemical changes which provide energy
metabolize	process of breaking down substances in the cells to obtain energy
metastasis	spread of cancer cells from one part of the body to another
mobility	ease of movement
monitor	check on; keep track of; watch carefully
morbidity	undesired result or complication

mortality	death
motility	the ability to move
MRI	magnetic resonance imaging, diagnostic pictures of the inside of the body, created using magnetic rather than x-ray energy
mucosa, mucous membrane	moist lining of digestive, respiratory, reproductive, and urinary tracts
mucositis/stomatitis	sores in the mouth and esophagus, which may be painful and cause difficulty swallowing
myalgia	muscle aches
Myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS)/Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)	A disorder that develops when the cells in the bone marrow (the soft inner part of the bones, where new blood cells are made) do not work properly and have problems making new blood cells.
myocardial	pertaining to the heart muscle
myocardial infarction	heart attack
N	
nasogastric tube	tube placed in the nose, reaching to the stomach
nausea	feeling sick to the stomach
necrosis	death of tissue
neoplasia/neoplasm	tumor, may be benign or malignant
neuroblastoma	a cancer of nerve tissue
neurologic deficits	a neurologic deficit is a decrease in the function of the brain, spinal cord, muscles, and/or nerves
neurological	pertaining to the nervous system
neuropathy	damage to the nerves which can cause numbness, pain, and weakness
neutropenia	condition in which the number of white bloods cells called neutrophils is abnormally low
noninvasive	not breaking, cutting, or entering the skin
nosocomial	acquired in the hospital
O	
occlusion	closing; blockage; obstruction
off-label use	a drug prescribed for conditions other than those approved by the FDA.
oncology	the study of tumors or cancer
ophthalmic	pertaining to the eye
opportunistic infections	an infection caused by an organism that usually does not cause illness, but causes disease when a person's immune response (resistance) to infection is impaired
oral administration	by mouth
oropharynx	part of the back of the throat
orthopedic	pertaining to the bones
ostealgia	bone pain
osteopetrosis	rare bone disorder characterized by dense bone
osteoporosis	softening of the bones
ovaries	female sex glands
P	
palpitation	feelings or sensations that your heart is pounding or racing
pancreatitis	inflammation of the pancreas causing pain in the upper abdomen
pancytopenia	abnormal decrease in the levels of all type of blood cells
parenteral	given by injection
percutaneous	through the skin
peripheral	not central
peripheral blood	vein blood
pharmacogenetics	the study of how the actions of and reactions to drugs vary with a person's genes

pharmacokinetics	the study of the way the body absorbs, distributes, and gets rid of a drug how long the study drug stays in your body
pharmacodynamics	the study of how the study drug acts on and in your body
phenotype	the physical manifestation of a gene function
phlebitis	irritation or inflammation of the vein
placebo	an inactive substance; a pill/liquid that contains no medicine
placenta	afterbirth
plasma	fluid found in the blood
platelet	part of blood that causes clots
pleural effusion	collection of fluid around the lungs in the chest cavity, which can cause shortness of breath and may require treatment
potential	possible
potentiate	to enhance or increase the effect of a drug by giving another drug at the same time
prenatal	before birth
prone	lying on the stomach
prophylaxis	use of drugs to prevent disease
prosthesis	artificial part, most often limbs, such as arms or legs
proteinuria	excess protein in the urine
proximal	closer to the center of the body, away from the end
pruritis	itchy skin
psychosis	nervous breakdown
pulmonary	pertaining to the lungs
pulmonary embolism	a blood clot that causes a sudden blockage in a lung artery, usually due to a blood clot that traveled to the lung from the leg
pulmonary fibrosis	tissue in the lungs becomes stiff making breathing difficult, resulting in shortness of breath, and if severe, can cause heart failure
pulmonary hypertension	abnormally high blood pressure in the blood vessels in the lungs, which makes it harder to pump blood into the lungs
Q	
R	
radiation therapy	x-ray or cobalt treatment
random	by chance (like the flip of a coin)
randomization	Replace with....You will be randomly placed (by chance, rather than by choice) in one of the study groups described below.
Raynaud's Syndrome	an autoimmune disorder causing blood vessels to spasm when exposed to cold
recombinant	formation of new combinations of genes
reconstitution	putting back together the original parts or elements
recur	happen again
refractory	not responding to treatment
regeneration	re-growth of a structure or of lost tissue
regimen	pattern of giving treatment
relapse	the return of a disease
remission	disappearance of evidence of cancer or other disease
remuneration	payment for participation in research; this is different from compensation, which typically refers to payment for research-related injuries
renal	pertaining to the kidneys
replicable	possible to duplicate
resect	remove or cut out surgically

respiratory failure	difficulty breathing with low levels of oxygen in the blood, which could be serious and life threatening and require you to have a tube inserted into your windpipe that is hooked up to a machine to help you breathe
rhabdomyolysis	rhabdomyolysis is a breakdown of muscle fibers.
rigors	chills and shivering
S	
saline	salt water solution
sarcoma	a type of cancer
secretion	release
sedative	a drug to calm or make less anxious
seizures	convulsions
seminoma	a type of testicular cancer (found in the male sex glands)
sequentially	in a row, in order
side effects	any undesired actions or effects of a drug or treatment
simultaneous	at the same time
somnolence	sleepiness
specimen	a sample, as of human tissue, blood or urine, used for diagnostic or pathological analyses
spirometer	an instrument to measure the amount of air taken into and exhaled from the lungs
staging	an evaluation of the extent of the disease
stenosis	narrowing of a duct, tube, or one of the blood vessels in the heart
Stevens-Johnson syndrome	skin condition that causes painful blisters and sores of the skin and mucous membranes, especially in the mouth
stimuli	something which causes a change
stomatitis	mouth sores, inflammation of the mouth
stupor	stunned state in which it is difficult to get a response or the attention of the subject
subclavian	under the collarbone
subcutaneous	under the skin
supine	lying on the back
supine position	lying on the back
supplement	add
supportive care	general medical care aimed at symptoms, not intended to improve or cure underlying disease
syndrome	a condition characterized by a set of symptoms
systolic	top number in blood pressure; pressure during active contraction of the heart
T	
T-lymphocytes	type of white blood cells
tachycardia	fast heart rate
teratogenic	capable of causing malformations in a fetus (developing baby still inside the mother's body)
testes/testicles	male sex glands
thrombocytopenia	Low number of platelets, which may cause bleeding and bruising. May require a blood transfusion. Bleeding may be serious or life threatening.
thrombosis	clotting
thrombus	blood clot
tinnitus	ringing in the ears
titration	gradually increasing the dose
topical	on the surface
topical anesthetic	applied to a certain area of the skin and reducing pain only in the area to which applied
toxicity	side effects or undesirable effects of a drug or treatment

transdermal	through the skin
transiently	temporarily
trauma	injury; wound
U	
uptake	absorbing and taking in of a substance by living tissue
urticaria	hives
V	
valvuloplasty	plastic repair of a valve, especially a heart valve
varices	enlarged veins
vasospasm	narrowing of the blood vessels
vector	a carrier that can transmit disease-causing microorganisms (germs and viruses)
venipuncture	needle stick, blood draw, entering the skin with a needle
visual disturbances	inability to see properly.
WXYZ	