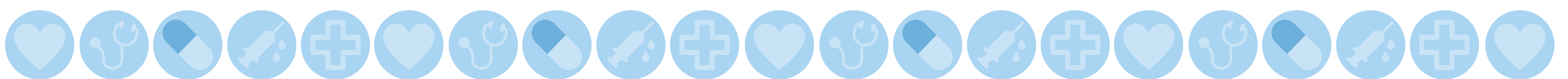# THE MOST

COMMON

MISTRANSLATIONS

IN THE

MEDICAL FIELD

A brief glossary for US and LA Spanish, created by the team of

HEALTHCARE TRANSLATIONS

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One of the most frequent causes of error in the translation of medical English is **misleading terms**; that is, words that are translated incorrectly because they have a different common use.

There are also words that belong to the group of **"false friends"**, i.e. words with very similar spellings across a pair of languages but with different meanings when translated.

Since in a field as specific as medicine, one can easily fall into such linguistic traps, at **Healthcare Translations** we have prepared a brief list of the most common mistranslations in the medical field for US and LA Spanish.

In this list, we include medical terminology in English, its general and healthcare-specific translation in Spanish, and finally a **brief explanation of these ambiguities.**

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Medical terminology in English	General translation to Spanish	Medical translation to Spanish	Description of ambiguities
Admission	"Confesión", "entrada" or "admisión".	"Ingreso", but "entrada" or "admisión" may be also correct.	In general, admission can be translated as **"confesión", "entrada", or "admisión"**. The correct translation used for hospital services is "ingreso". However, "admisión" or "entrada" may be correct depending on the context, for example, as synonyms for admitting a patient to hospital services.
Arm	"Brazo".	"Brazo" or "grupo de estudio", depending on the context.	The correct translation may vary depending on the context. For example, it can be translated as a body part, **"brazo"**; but sometimes for medical or pharmaceutical research, it can be **"grupo de estudio"**.
Arrest	"Detener", "arrestar", or "capturar".	"Paro cardiorrespiratorio".	In general, arrest can be translated as "detener", "arrestar" or "capturar". However, its use in cardiology means **"paro cardiorrespiratorio"**.
Compound fracture	"Fractura compuesta".	"Fractura abierta" or "fractura complicada".	Although it is common to find the term compound fracture as "fractura compuesta", in traumatology the proper translation is **"fractura abierta"** or "fractura complicada".
Cough drops	"Gotas" or "jarabe".	"Pastillas para la tos".	Although this term would make us think of **"gotas"** or **"jarabe"**, its parallel in Spanish is **"pastillas para la tos"**.
Culture	"Cultura".	"Cultivo".	In general, culture can be translated as **"cultura"**, but in medicine the correct translation is **"cultivo"**.
Descent	"Descenso" or "pendiente".	"Ascendencia", although "descenso" can also be used depending on the context.	In general descent means **"descenso"** or **"pendiente"**. In medical interrogation and for genealogical purposes, the translation is **"ascendencia"**. However, **"descenso"** can also be used in medicine depending on the context, for example in obstetrics during labor.
Discharge	"Descarga", "disparo", "despido" or "baja".	"Secreción", "flujo", "supuración" or "dar de alta", depending on the context.	Discharge is a word that in medical terms can have two main meanings when translated to Spanish; first, discharge as **"secreción"**, that is, a flow or oozing from the body (**"flujo"** o **"supuración"**); and the second as **"dar de alta"** (to discharge a patient).
Labor	"Mano de obra".	"Parto".	Labor can be translated as **"mano de obra"**, but in obstetrics this term translates as **"parto"**.

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Medical terminology in English	General translation to Spanish	Medical translation to Spanish	Description of ambiguities
Mold	"Molde" or "modelo".	"Moho".	In general, mold can be translated as **"molde"** or **"modelo"**. In infectology and biology, the translation is **"moho"**.
Murmur	"Murmullo" or "rumor".	"Soplo cardíaco".	In general, murmur can be translated as **"murmullo"** or **"rumor"**. In cardiology, the translation is **"soplo cardiáco"**.
Premenstrual tension	"Tensión menstrual".	"Síndrome premenstrual".	The symptoms associated with ovulation and menstruation of the menstrual cycle constitute a syndrome, therefore, the correct translation is **"síndrome premenstrual"** and not **"tensión menstrual"**.
Rash	"Impulsivo" or "Temerario".	"Erupción cutánea", "urticaria", "sarpullido" or "exantema", depending on the context.	Rash can be translated as a personality trait, therefore **"impulsivo"** or **"temerario"**, but its use in dermatology, and depending on the context, implies a skin condition, like **"urticaria"**, **"sarpullido"**, **"exantema"** or **"erupción cutánea"**.
Regression	"Regresión" or "retroceso".	"Remisión", "retroceso", "retroceso a estados psicológicos previos", depending on the context.	In general, the translations for regression are **"regresión"** or **"retroceso"**; however, for different medical branches their meanings vary. In oncology, regression means **"remisión"** (decrease or disappearance of signs and symptoms of cancer). In psychology, **"retroceso a estados psicológicos previos"** (a return to previous psychological states or as an improvement of a disease).
Safe	"Seguro".	"No dañino" or "inocuo".	Safe can be translated as **"seguro"**; however, in the pharmaceutical field the term is more related to **"no dañino"** or **"inocuo"**.
Screening	"Proyección" or "estreno".	"Exploración", "cribado", "selección" or "detección sistemática", depending on the context.	Screening translated into Spanish is **"proyección"** or **"estreno"**. Its correct use in the medical field would be **"exploración"** or **"detección sistemática"** (testing individuals who are not known to have a disease so that they can be identified and treated before problems occur). However, **"cribado"** can be used within the framework of health systems, as the performance of diagnostic tests on otherwise healthy people, to identify those who are probably ill from those who are not.
Susceptible	"Sensible", "impresionable" or "susceptible".	"Predispuesto" o "propenso", depending on the context.	In general,"sensible", "impresionable" or "susceptible". In medicine, **"predispuesto"** or **"propenso"**, depending on the context.

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