

Pudendum 'shame' controversy: When medical terms promote sexist stereotypes

Allison Draper loved anatomy class. As a first-year medical student at the University of Miami, she found the language clear, precise, functional... Then one day she looked up the pudendal nerve, which provides sensation to the vagina and vulva, or outer female genitalia. The term derived from the Latin verb pudere: to be ashamed.

The shame nerve, Ms. Draper noted: "I was like, What? Excuse me?"

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In 2016, [head of anatomy at Cardiff University Dr. Bernard] Moxham proposed that the [International Federation of Associations of Anatomists'] terminology group — which was, at the time, all male and mostly European — remove "pudendum" and related words from its upcoming dictionary.

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The decision came quietly. Ms. Draper learned about it in late 2019 from a paragraph at the bottom of a [medical article](#): "Pudendum" would no longer appear as an official term in the upcoming version of "Terminologia Anatomica."

However, the article noted, the pudendal artery, canal and nerve would remain relatively unchanged "because the use of the word pudendalis in terms for structures present in both sexes cannot be interpreted as sexist."

In other words, if the shame was spread equally, maybe it wasn't so bad.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.**](#)