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## ENGLISH FOR A RUSSIAN MEDICAL PRACTITIONER: CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS

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DOI: 10.24411/2500-1000-2020-10822

**Abstract.** *English is an essential part of academic programmes in any medical university in Russia. According to the Federal educational standards undergraduate medical students study Anatomy, Biology, Chemistry and other basic subjects to understand how human bodies work. However, there are humanities including English that give some extra knowledge apart from specifically medical. There must be some important reasons for this. So in this article I would like to deal with the main aims and benefits of studying medical English and also cover some challenges that may appear.*

*Every country has its own history, language, unique national and cultural features. At the same time, medicine and health studies share universal aspects that are common for all countries. The main goals of healthcare and medicine are disease prevention and treatment, health promotion and prolonging life. These are global objectives. The author of this paper argues that English along with professional competencies can be an effective instrument to achieve these goals. Medicine is an international science and speaking the same language doctors can succeed in dealing with global health challenges and threats.*

**Keywords:** *English language, globalisation, an effective foreign language communication, cooperation, challenge, benefit, opportunity.*

The process of learning languages is fascinating, because with languages learners can explore a new world. There is no doubt that the main aim of learning foreign languages for common people is to develop an ability to socialise with people from different countries and cultures. This aspect is extremely important especially nowadays when the society is growing global. The English language is becoming not only an international communication resource but also a key to universal unity.

Medical community is also a crucial part of a global community. It is fairly often that they have to organize international teams or units to struggle with life-threatening epidemic as they do now fighting against COVID-19 pandemic [1]. Obviously, healthcare workers are to be able to communicate with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, so English is usually the language they use both for teamwork and doctor-patient communication [2]. This is one of the reasons for English to be an essential part of academic curriculum of Russian medical universities [3]. However, some medical students

fail to understand the contribution of this subject to their professional training. In this paper we set objective to describe challenges and benefits Russian medical students encounter during English language learning at a medical university. Our observations are based on our own experience of learning English for medical purposes and are collected during academic year 2019-2020 at Voronezh N.N. Burdenko State Medical University.

### Challenges

There are many problems medical students face in the process of English language learning. We can suggest some of these problems are fairly common for language learners of other professional trainings, e.g. engineering, biology, chemistry, while other difficulties might be specific for medical students. We will describe them all below.

The first one, which is the most common, is the lack of basic knowledges of the English language. Some students failed to develop solid grammar and vocabulary background when they were studying English at school. It can be difficult for them to work with texts and to complete writing tasks, focused on

professional topics, such as healthcare and diseases.

The other problem is the fear of making mistakes. It is a widespread trouble which that can be difficult to deal with. Many people try to avoid speaking English in front of the class because they are unconfident or shy. As a result, in future they are unable to use the language in their study and work. Moreover, even students with relatively high command of English often suffer from the lack of self-confidence while doing both oral and written assignments in English for medical purposes.

Many people also do not take into consideration the complexity of foreign language learning. It is time- and energy-consuming because of the vast amounts of information that need to be memorized. Students need to work hard on their pronunciation and grammar to succeed.

Other students neglect English at university because they find other subjects, such as biology or chemistry, more useful and important. They suppose that medical English is unnecessary for a future doctor. Such students do not spare time on developing their knowledges and skills and do not consider the English language as a resource of personal development or for international communication.

All these problems can often occur in a complex and overcoming this hardship can be strenuous.

#### Benefits

There are many benefits that students and doctors can gain from the knowledge of the medical English. The first one is the opportunity to read foreign periodicals and scientific publications and use foreign books and articles for study. The English language is an international language of science. Nowadays medical science in English-speaking and European countries is developing very fast and modern technologies make it possible to perform some scientific researches and experiments with greater precision.

Searching for information in Russian and English resources may give different results. Having analysed the outlook and contents of American and Russian anatomy textbooks [4, 5], we have noticed that the American book has more illustrations and the information

there is presented in a more structured and well-organised form. In English-speaking and European countries anatomy and histology are studied together, so this book also contains the information on the structure of tissues. Although we fully support Russian textbooks for national education, there is no denying that classical textbooks in English can support students with revision, structuring and systematisation of anatomy and histology knowledge. Thus, using foreign literature for studying and work helps to consider well-known aspects from new angles and to constantly up-date knowledge.

The other benefit is enhancing self-development opportunities. Self-education and personal development is an essential part of a specialist's life. Qualified healthcare professionals have to keep up with updates and innovations, therefore they have to use English as a tool for continuing professional development [6].

The 21st century is the time of information accessibility. In the previous century people had to spend much time in libraries trying to find information, but in the modern world we have the access even to highly specialised information via the Internet. Good knowledge of the language can give access to a variety of courses, libraries and on-line conferences.

It may be helpful not only for qualified specialists, but also for students who have not chosen their speciality yet, because watching professionals' speeches can help them to make a decision. Students who already managed to find themselves in the medical field can master their skills and knowledges and explore the other areas of science.

Continuing medical education and professional development is also necessary for healthcare workers. Technologies which are used in the medical sphere do not stand still, becoming modernised all the time, and some new equipment appear, and the majority of it is being tested and implemented in Europe, the UK and the USA.

Studying abroad give the opportunity for Russian doctors to increase the level of healthcare introducing new technologies in our country. Specialists also can gain invaluable knowledge by learning from foreign colleagues' experience. English language pro-

vides an opportunity for studying foreign methods and techniques of treatment, physician-patient and interactions or interaction with patient's family members. Putting it into practice may help to avoid medical malpractice and improve the healthcare system.

The knowledge of medical English gives an opportunity to collaborate in the professional sphere and to share experience. English-speaking researchers can take part in international projects and conferences and spread their ideas. They develop their professional qualification and contribute to global medicine improvement. Thus, English opens doors to international cooperation and collaborative research activities, which are of particular importance in the modern world.

Health promotion is a significant part of medical activities, and all countries should exchange experience and share achievements in this. English can help medical practitioners of different countries to participate in the process of finding solutions for problems that

are common to all humanity. The fight against AIDS, smoking, drug and alcohol abuse needs bringing together doctors' efforts to be successful. The current struggle against COVID-19 has already proven the necessity of joint medical efforts and the common language contribution in this struggle cannot be overestimated.

**Conclusion.** In a nutshell, we have clearly seen that the advantages of learning and using English in healthcare significantly outweigh the challenges students have while learning English in a medical university. The cooperation between Russian health workers and their colleagues from different countries needs an effective foreign language communication. Successful experience sharing and defeating the global medical problems depend on health workers' English language proficiency and their ability to be a part of an international team. That is the main reason why studying English is an essential part of academic programmes in any medical university in Russia.

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## АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ДЛЯ РОССИЙСКОГО ВРАЧА: ВЫЗОВЫ И ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА

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***Аннотация.** Английский язык является неотъемлемой частью академических программ в любом медицинском университете в России. Согласно федеральным образовательным стандартам студенты-медики изучают анатомию, биологию, химию и другие базовые предметы, чтобы понять, как работает человеческий организм. Тем не менее, есть гуманитарные науки, в том числе английский язык, которые дают дополнительные знания помимо конкретных медицинских наук. Для этого есть несколько важных причин. Вот почему в данной статье автор обращает внимание на основные цели и преимущества изучения медицинского английского языка, а также освещает некоторые проблемы, которые могут возникнуть в ходе этого процесса.*

*Каждая страна имеет свою историю, язык, уникальные национальные и культурные особенности. В то же время исследования в области медицины и здравоохранения имеют аспекты, общие для всех стран. Основными задачами здравоохранения и медицины являются профилактика и лечение заболеваний, укрепление здоровья и продление жизни. Это глобальные цели. Автор статьи утверждает, что английский, наряду с профессиональными компетенциями, может быть эффективным инструментом для достижения этих целей. Медицина - это международная наука, и, говоря на одном языке, врачи могут успешно решать глобальные проблемы и угрозы для здоровья.*

***Ключевые слова:** английский язык, глобализация, эффективное иноязычное общение, сотрудничество, вызов, выгода, возможность.*