

Review Article

From where did the names of dermatology drugs and brands come from?

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Knowing the origin of the dermatology terms carries some advantages.¹ This may not be limited to the names of the diseases, but it also includes the names of the drugs.

With expansion of dermatology products, many names are being formulated, and the majority of which bear no particular meaning or source. Some pharmaceutical companies now depend on a marketing company to create brand names for their products. The most important thing for the names of the products is that they are not the same or similar to other brands, as such similarities might cause mistake in prescribing and dispensing these products. Brand name has to be easy to spell and pronounce, easy to remember, give clue to the ingredients of the products or its uses, and carry no offensive meanings in any language around the world.

In scientific literature in general, it is common to blend two words into one term, such as the use of portmanteau type of word. Portmanteau is a word or a morpheme (morpheme is the smallest linguistic unit that has semantic meaning), that fuses two

or more words or word parts to give a combined or loaded meaning. Portmanteau formerly referred to a large traveling bag or suitcase with two compartments, hence the linguistic idea of fusing two words and their meanings into one.

The pharmaceuticals companies are also interested to use the names that endorse the effectiveness of their products. This is why it is not uncommon in medicine to hear the affixes (prefix and suffix) like "Forte" , "Plus" or "Extra".

Nonetheless, there are some drugs and brands in dermatology that carries some reasoning in its names. **Table 1** shows the source of the names for a selected dermatology drugs and brands.²⁻⁶

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Table 1 The source of the names for a selected drugs and brands used in dermatology

Name of the drug or the brand	Source of the name
Bacitracin	The <i>bacillus</i> producing it was first isolated in 1943 from a knee scrape from a girl named Margaret Tracy. ²
Burow's solution	Invented in the mid-1800s by Karl August Burow, an ophthalmologist. ³
NIVEA	Latin word <i>niveus/nivea/niveum</i> (meaning snow-white) ⁴
Nystatin	New York State Public Health Department (now known as the Wadsworth Center) in 1954. ⁵
Rifamycins	It is isolated from a soil isolate, <i>Nocardia mediterranei</i> . Several substances were extracted from the fermentation broth. A specific antibacterial substance was chosen for more extensive evaluation. The substance was nicknamed Riffi after the title of a then popular French movie, "LeRiffi". The nickname is the source of the name rifamycin. ⁶
Vaseline	Claimed to be from the German word for water, <i>Wasser</i> (pronounced as vahser), and the Greek word for oil, <i>elaion</i> , but this is unconfirmed. ⁷

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