KISWAHILI - MEDICALLY

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Adapted from the original attempt by Moi-Indiana University Partnership

Objective: Exchange programme and those students who have difficulty in their communicating in Kiswahili in the clinical areas

Here is a beginning list of words you might find helpful as you work. Kiswahili is NOT a language that one can begin to speak readily since nouns are divided into eight classes, which do not always make sense to the English speaker. Prepositions, verbs, adjectives, etc. must agree with the class of the noun being modified – AND it gets worse before things fall into place (IF they ever do!).

Much more than language is involved: as examples - the honing of the power of observation, the sniffing out of the unusual, and the overriding of pattern recognition by the worry that the information from the patient does not all fit the initial hypothesis generated. SHENG acronym for Kiswahili English has several genre, but is spoken mainly by the youth. As much as possible SHENG have been avoided here but do not be surprised if you come across it, learn some bit of it.

If you ask a question to a patient, you may find it difficult to understand his or her answer. Still, knowing a few words may help you to understand the jist of the conversation occurring at bedside. Generally, if a patient or Kenyan counterpart is referring to a certain person within the hospital, the following holds true:

“Sisters” = nurses

“Nursing officers” = male nurses

“Matron” = head nurse

“Medical Officer” (MO) = post intern physician assigned to the District Hospital

“Clinical Officer” (CO) = similar to a physician assistant

“Intern” = interns
“Consultant” = consultants

All of the above mentioned speak English and will happily interpret for you IF they can be found.

If you think of other words or phrases you would like to have, let us know, and we will try to research them for you...

**BODY PARTS:**

Mwili/miili = body/bodies

Moyo/mioyo = heart/hearts

Mkono/mikono = hand/arms, hands

Kiko cha mkono = elbow

Kichwa/vichwa = head/heads

Bega/mabega = chest/chests

Titi/matiti = breast/breasts

Ubavu/mbavu = rib/ribs

Tumbo/matumbo = stomach/stomachs

Uum, [vulgar, mbocyo] = penis actually, one NEVER refers to genitals by name

One says “down there” which is huko chini.

IF one has to be more specific one refers to the mans “thing” as kitu, kuma or uke = vagina One can also refer to the birth canal = njia ya uzazi

Mguu/miguu = leg/legs, foot/feet

Goti/magoti = knee/knees

Kidole/vidole = finger/fingers, toe/toes

Uso/nyuso = face/faces
Jicho/macho = eye/eyes
Sikio/maskio = ear/ears
Pua/mapua = nose/noses
Mdomo/midomo = mouth/mouths
Ulimi/ndimi = tongue/tongues
Jino/meno = tooth/teeth

**MEDICAL WORDS:**

Kidonda/vidonda = Sore (noun)
Mganga/waganga = (native?) Doctor/s
(ku)ganga = To treat
Mgonjwa/wagonjwa = Patient/s, sick person/s
Mavi = Feaces/feces (not often used –considered rude [shit]) (usually “choo” is used for a “heavy load”)
Mkojo = Urine (“light load”)
Kifo = Death
Sumu = Poison
(ku)tapika = To vomit
Dawa = Drug
Hospitali = Hospital
Magonjwa = Diseases
Ugonjwa = Illness, sickness
Uzee = Old age
Angalia pale = Look there
Ukuta = Wall
Tazama = Look
Pumua = Breathe
Pumua nje = Breathe out
Pumua ndani = Breathe in
Pumua tena = Breathe again
Toa shati nyako = Take off your shirt
Toa nguo = Take off things
Vua nguo = Take off your clothes
Wacha kupumua sasa= Don’t (to) breathe now
Kohoa = Cough
Shika = Hold, catch, keep
Sema = Say
Pinduka = Turn around (oneself)
Kaa/keti = Sit
Simama = Stand up
Nyamaza = Be quiet
Fungua = Open
Funga = Close
Jilegeze = Relax
Daktari = Doctor
Sabuni = Soap
Kiwete = Cripple/deformed person
Cheka = Laugh

Ngozi = Skin (of human or animal)

Toa ulimi nje = Stick out your tongue

Viini = Germs

Kifua Kikuu = Tuberculosis(TB)

Kisonono = Gonorrhea

Kaswende = syphilis

Ukimwi = AIDS

Kwa muda gain? = How long?

Kwa siku gapi? = How many days?

Damu = Blood

**VERBS** (which have to agree with the noun class):

(ku)na = to have

(ku)sema = to say

(ku)lala = to sleep

(ku)meza = to swallow

(ku)ja = to come (Kuja hapa! = Come here!)

(ku)kwenda = to go

(ku)tembea = to walk

(ku)sikia = to listen

(ku)andika = to write

(ku)tenda = to do

(ku)la = to eat
(ku)nywa = to drink
(ku)dhuku = to taste

**NUMBERS** (these also agree with the associated noun class):

Moja = one
Mbili or wili = two
Tatu = three
Nne = four
Tano = five
Sita = six
Saba = seven
Nane = eight
Tisa = nine
Kumi = ten
Nusu = one half
Kumi na moja = eleven
Kumi na mbili = twelve
Ishirini = twenty
Theلاثني = thirty
Arobaini = forty
Hamsini = fifty
Sitini = sixty
Sabini = seventy
Themanini = eighty
Tisini = ninety
Mia = one hundred
Elfu = one thousand

NON-MEDICAL WORDS AND PHRASES THAT MAY RELATE TO YOUR WORK:

Words:
Na = and
Au = or
Ndiyo = yes
La = no
Kitabu/vitabu = book
Chakula/vyakula = food/s
Choo = latrine, toilet
Kiti/viti = chair/s
Mwalimu/walimu = teacher/s
Mwanume/wanume = man/men
Mwanamke/wabawaje = woman/women
Mwana/wana = son/s, child/children
Mtoto/watoto = child/ren
Mzee/wazee = old or respected man/men
Mwavuli/mivuli = umbrella/s
Mkate/mikate = bread/s
Mlango/milango = door/s
Nyumbani = home

Tea = Chai

Milk = maziwa

**PHRASES:**

Tafadhali = Please

Jambo = Hello

Ndiyo = Yes

Hapana = No

Kulia = Right

Kushoto = Left

Kidogo = Little

Sawa = OK

Tena = Again

Moto = Hot

Baridi = Cold

Asante = Thank you

Karibu = Welcome

Sana = A lot

Basi = That’s all

Pole pole = slow

Pole = sorry

Kwaheri! = Goodbye!

**MEDSWAHILI**
**Greetings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you know English?</td>
<td>Je, unajua Kingereza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you?</td>
<td>Habari yako? / Jambo=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m fine, and you?</td>
<td>Mzuri, na wewe? = I”m fine, and you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your name?</td>
<td>Jina lako ni nani? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My name is Doctor Kamau James</td>
<td>Jina langu ni Daktari Kamau James =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What village are you from?</td>
<td>Unatoka Kijiji gani? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How old are you?</td>
<td>Una umri gani? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no problem</td>
<td>Hakuna Matata=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to be Kenyan</td>
<td>Najivunia kuwa MKenya=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**History:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you feel today?</td>
<td>Unasikiaje leo? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you sick/suffer?</td>
<td>Unauguaje? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long?</td>
<td>Tangu lini? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do you hurt?</td>
<td>Unaumwa wapi? =</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your head hurt?</td>
<td>“ kitchwa? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your eyes hurt?</td>
<td>“ macho? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your nose hurt?</td>
<td>“ mapua? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your ear hurt?</td>
<td>“ sikio? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your throat hurt?</td>
<td>“ kifua? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your chest hurt?</td>
<td>“ kifua? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your stomach hurt?</td>
<td>“ tumbo? =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your back hurt?</td>
<td>“ mgongo? =</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“mkono? = Does your arm hurt?
“mguu? = Does your leg hurt?
“Viungo? = Do your joints hurt?

Una joto/homa? = Do you have a fever?
Unatapika? = Are you vomiting?
Unahara? = Are you having diarrhea?
Unakohoa? = Are you coughing?
Unapumua haraka? = Are you breathing faster (SOB)?
Una sikia jasho usiku? = Do you have night sweats?
Umepunguza uzito? = Are you losing weight?
Unakula na kunywa vizuri? = Are you eating and drinking well?

**Review of Systems:**

**HEENT (hearing, ear, eye nose and throat):**

Unaweza kusikia na kuona vizuri? = Can you hear and see O.K.?
Ulikuwa na damu kwa mapua? = Are you having a nosebleed?
Maji katika masikio? = Do you have drainage from the ears?
Unaumwa koo? = Are you having pain in the throat?

**CHEST/CORE:**

Je, Unapumua haraka kwa kulala/kutembia? = Are you Shortness of breath(SOB) lying/walking?
Je, Unakohoa makohozidi? = Are you coughing phlegm?
Je, Rangi gani? = What color?

Mayai = Yellow
Nyeupe = White
Nyekundu = Red
Damu = Blood

**Gastrointestinal/Genital Urinary system:**
Je, Unaenda haja kubwa? = Have you have a Bowel Motion? (gone for a „long call‟)
Je, Unaenda haja ndogo? = Have you urinated? (gone for a „short call‟)
Je, Unahara damu? = Are you having bloody diarrhea?

**External:**
Je, Unafura miguu? = Any swelling of the legs?
Je, Una kidonda? = Do you have a sore/ulcer?
Je, Unavipele? = Do you have a rash?

**Central Nervous System:**
Usingizi mzito = very deep sleep or coma
Kifafa = Epilepsy/fit
Dhaifu = Weakness
Kulaganzi = Numbness
Ziwezi kutemba vizuri – I can‟t walk right

**Past Medical History:**
Una allergy kwa dawa? = Are you allergic to medicine?
Unapata dawa? = Are you getting medicine?
Unaweza nunua dawa? = Can you by medicine?
Shida yeyote ya zamani? = Have you had illness in the past?
Unavuta sigara? = Do you smoke?
Unakunywa pombe? = Do you drink alcohol?

**Physical Examination:**

Sasa nitapima wewe = Now I will examine you.

Tafadhali, toa shati/koti/viatu = Please take off your shirt/coat/shoes

Keti = Sit up

Lala = Lie down

Fungua mdomo = Open your mouth

Sema ah = Say ah

Unaumwa hapa = Does it hurt here? (tenderness)

Pumua ndani/nje = Breathe in/out

Wacha kupumua = Stop breathing

Unainua mguu/mkono = Lift up your leg/arm

Legeza = Relax

Inamisha kichwa = Bend your head

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