

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

uume, [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 gani? = 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

Thelathini = 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:

Je, unajua Kingereza = Do you know English?

Habari yako? / Jambo= How are you?

Mzuri, na wewe? = I'm fine, and you?

Jina lako ni nani? = What is your name?

Jina langu ni Daktari Kamau James = My name is Doctor Kamau James

Unatoka Kijiji gani? = What village are you from?

Una umri gani? = How old are you?

Hakuna Matata= no problem

Najivunia kuwa MKenya= I am proud to be Kenyan

History:

Unasikiaje leo? = How do you feel today?

Unauguaje? = How are you sick/suffer?

Tangu lini? = How long?

Unaumwa wapi? = Where do you hurt?

“ kitchwa? = Does your head hurt?

“ macho? = Do your eyes hurt?

“ mapua? = Does your nose hurt?

“ sikio? = Does your ear hurt?

“ koo? = Does your throat hurt?

“ kifua? = Does your chest hurt?

“ tumbo? = Does your stomach hurt?

“ mgongo? = Does your back hurt?

“ 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 makohozi? = 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

Kufaganzi = 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 buy 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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