

# Intercom

## Duke University Medical Center

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DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

### In First Human Resource Development Course

## Illogical Images Teach Medical Terminology

By John Becton

A slide flashes onto the screen and shows a mother who recently has given birth to twins. Several other children around are exclaiming, "Oh, ma, two more!"

After seeing this image, one remembers that the suffix *-oma* means "tumor."

"Many people said that there was no way to make a medical terminology course interesting, but we think we have found a unique approach," according to Dr. Ann Britt, director of human resource development.

The course here is using the Dean Vaughn Learning System, she said.

#### Fascinating Method

In planning the medical terminology course, Britt found that, in fact, most approaches to the subject were uninteresting, but the Dean Vaughn approach was a significant exception.

"We had a group of medical center employees preview the course and everyone found it fascinating," Britt said. "And we contacted other places where it had been used, such as the Mayo Clinic, and found they had been pleased with the results."

The positive feedback has continued to come in from employees taking the course.

#### Ridiculous Pictures

The course features no homework, positively prohibits taking notes in class and promises close to 100% retention of some 300 Latin and Greek elements that make up about 10,000 complex medical terms.

Participants view a series of slide presentations which present roots along with pictures of objects whose names sound similar.

For example, *gastr-* is shown with a gas truck. Then the gas truck is shown with a human stomach for a gas tank. The image is so ridiculous, it comes to mind when one encounters *gastr-* later, and serves as a reminder that *gastr-* means "stomach."

Upbeat music and sound effects add to the effectiveness of the technique.

#### Good Times and Hard Work

Several laughs are also provided along the way, as the images depend on illogical associations for effectiveness. And while participants have said the course gets tougher as it proceeds, instructor Anne Drennan said the test scores have been getting progressively higher.

There are 12 sessions, and participants who successfully complete the course earn continuing education units (CEUs) through Piedmont Technical Institute.

Earned CEUs will be recorded in each employee's individual personnel file.

"This is important for transfer or moving to another job," Britt said. "Many people who are hiring note an applicant's continuing education work."

#### Developing the Assets

The Department of Human Resource Development was established and Britt appointed director in February.

The department is unique because of its scope, its potential for touching the lives of practically every employee and its working relationship with the state's community college system.

"Human resources are the most valuable assets of the hospital. The ultimate goal of developing these resources is to provide better patient care," Britt said.

#### Responding to Needs

Medical terminology was chosen as the topic for the first course, Britt explained, because it is so basic to the environment here and because of the extent of the perceived need.

"I had people calling me to say they had employees needing a

course in medical terminology, and the personnel office had a list of those who had called about it over the past few years," she said.

That the first class offered by the new department responded to a significant need is evidenced by the initial response. There were 180 applicants for 25 places.

Two more classes were added, including one at night, but the waiting list has grown to about 400, Britt said. The first class began May 19.

Britt noted that this particular course is indicative of the goal of her office to provide hospital-wide training.

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## Hyperbaric Laboratory Gets New Director, Dr. Bennett

Dr. Peter B. Bennett, professor of anesthesiology and associate professor of physiology, has been named director of the F.G. Hall Laboratory for Environmental Research (hyperbaric chamber).

He succeeds Dr. Herbert A. Saltzman, professor of medicine, who will remain with the laboratory as co-director, but is giving up administrative duties to devote more time to his clinical practice.

Announcement of the appointment came from Dr. William G. Anlyan, vice president for health affairs.

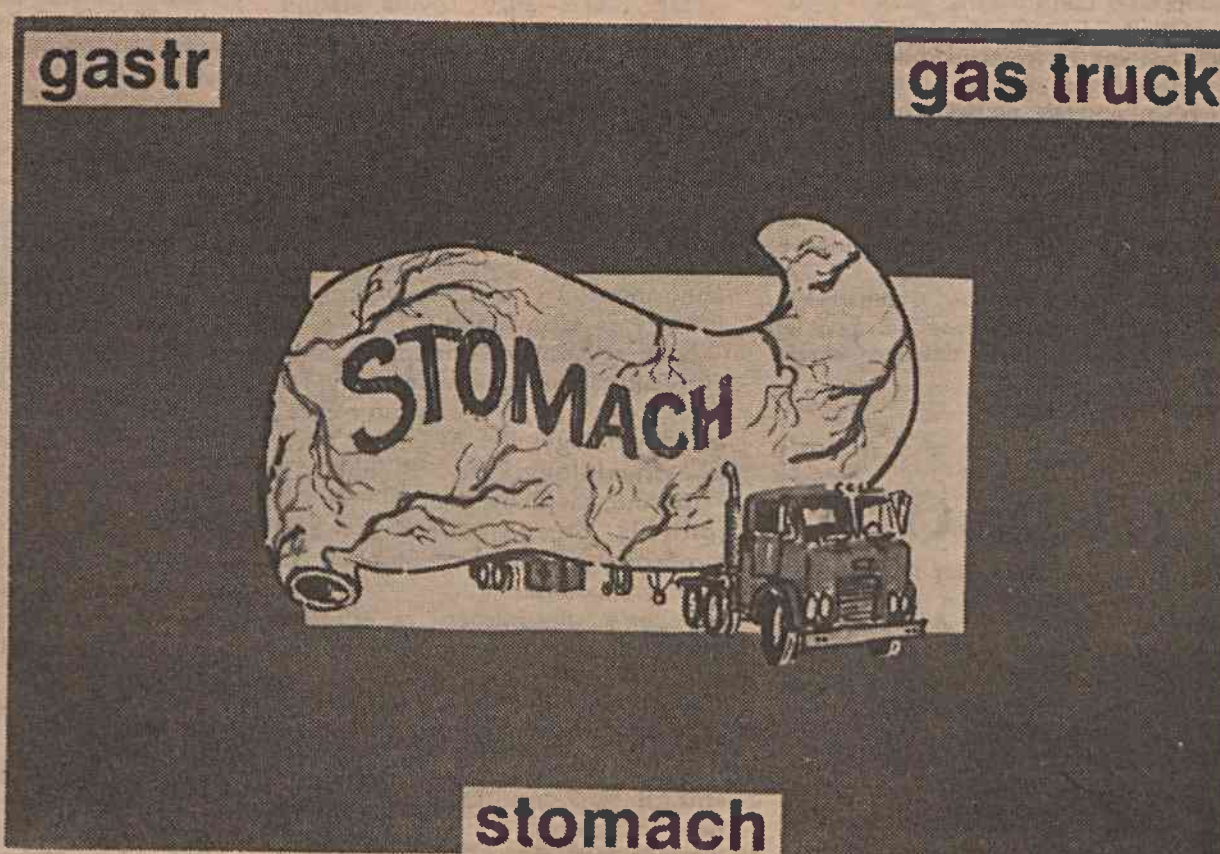
Bennett, 46, is a native of Alverstoke, near Portsmouth, England. An international expert on hyperbaric (high pressure) research, he joined the Duke faculty in 1972 and was named co-director of the Hall laboratory in 1974.

The scientist's chief research interests have centered on the mechanisms of general anesthesia and the physiological and medical problems affecting deep divers. He has published more than 100 scientific papers and several books on his investigations, and his recent

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**FUNNY, BUT IT WORKS**—Members of a medical terminology class are amused by a slide such as the one reproduced above, but the illogical association greatly increases retention. This approach was developed by Dean Vaughn Learning



Systems. The classes are the first offered by the Department of Human Resource Development, which has been established to provide hospital-wide employee training. The goal of this training is better patient care.