WHY CAN'T DOCTORS SPELL?

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The illegibility of doctors' handwriting has spawned innumerable jokes. Jottings that seem illegible and unintelligible may actually be technical terms that mimic commoner words. A cursory scan of Stedman's Medical Dictionary (1976) uncovered scores of seeming-ly-misspelled words. An abridged collection of these is given below, where each scientific term is followed by a brief definition, with its common look-alike in parentheses.

ABROSIA starvation (ambrosia)
ACOLOGY therapeutics (ecology)
ENERGY absence of sensitivity reactions (energy)
APATITE calcium fluoride phosphate (appetite)
AXION brain and spinal cord (axiom)
BHANG powdered Cannabis (bang)
BARBIES beriberi (barters)
BASION point on the foramen magnum (bastion, basin)
BOLDO evergreen leaves for liver disturbances (bold)
BUCCAL relating to the cheek (buckle)
CALICES subdivisions of the renal pelvis (calluses)
CALVITIES baldness (cavities)
CARIOUS afflicted with dental cavities (curious)
CAVITIS celophlebitis (cavities)
CHYME partially digested food (chime)
CLUNES buttocks (clones, clues)
CMEDO a blackhead (comedy)
CEREBRATION process of reasoning (celebration)
CUBEB West Indian fruit (cubed)
CUTH heart wood extract, for diarrhea (catch, clutch)
DECLIVE portion of the cerebellum (decline)
DELIGATION ligation (delegation)
DES-MON complement-fixing antibody (demon)
DIASTER double star figure in mitosis (disaster)
EDEA external genitalia (idea)
EDUCTION emerging from anesthesia (education)
EMPHARIC relating to an impaction (emphatic)
EPITHEM external application, like a poultice (epithet)
ERASION scraping away of bone (erosion)
ERGINE lysergic acid amide (engine)
ESTIVAL occurring in the summer (festival)
FANGO therapeutic mud from Italian springs (fangs, tango)
FASCIAL relating to tissue sheets under the skin (facial)

FEL bile (feal)
FORMATION a lamina
FORMOL formaldehyde
FRIT material
FUN-DUS lowest
GAVAGE feeding
GENAL (genital)
GRAVIDITY result
HAP-PUT through
HILLI organ
HISTIONIC pertaining
HORISMASCOPE an
HUMERUS arm
HUMIN insulating
HYGRINE insulating
HY-PINOSIS death
IMPATENT not
INCLUDM plus
INION external
INSOLATION insolation
INUNCTION an
IRON a cycli
KOSIN vermicular
LABILITY insulating
LIVOR a discoloration
LUES syphilis
LUMBAR pertaining
LURAL pertaining
MALA cheek (mela)
MANDRIN stiff
MASICOT leading
MATRASS a loaf
MEATUS the entrance
MEATAL pertaining
METAPORE an
MILLIARY resembling
MOLAL denoting
MONOE monos
MORSAL denoting
MUCIC an organism
MY-TACISM status
NASION skull
NATES buttock
NATRON hydrate
NEPHROID resembling

*Note: The list includes a variety of terms often used in medical contexts, with some of them appearing to be misspelled or intentionally altered to mimic everyday words. This is likely a humorous take on the challenges doctors face with handwriting legibility.*
wings or leaves, for example, and the muscle, or urodele, that is used to prop elasmobranchs (loth) against the mast, or molar, of elasmobranchs (loth).
NESTIS abstinence from food (nests)
NOTALGIA a pain in the back (nostalgia)
NUTATION act of nodding, especially involuntary (notation)
OBEX point on the medulla oblongata (ibex)
OMENTUM the membrane enclosing the bowels (momentum)
OMENTAL pertaining to the omentum (mental)
ORCHIL a violet dye from lichens (orchid)
ORGANICIST adherent of the theory of organicism (organist)
ROTATE salt or ester of acetic acid (rotate)
ROTIC 6-carboxylic acid (rotic)
OSMOLOGY study of odors (cosmology)
OSTALGIA pain in a bone (nostalgia)
PANIS bread (penis, panic)
PANTONINE an amino acid in E. coli (pantamine)
PARAPARETIC someone with slight paralysis (peripatetic)
PAVOR fear, terror (favor)
PERTA silver-staining, membranous organelle (pelts, delta)
PERIODIC surrounding the inner ear (periodic)
PILAR covered with hair (pillar)
PILARY covered with hair (pillary)
PILI hairs (pil, pile)
PILLION temporary artificial leg (billion)
PLANTER relating to the sole of the foot (planter)
PLASTID a structure in plant cytoplasm (plastic)
PLEDGET a tuft of wool, cotton or lint (pledges)
PLEURAL relating to the membrane surrounding the lungs (plural)
POMPHUS a wheal or blister (pompous)
POPLES ham of the knee (peoples)
PORION craniometric point (portion)
PREGRANATE parent hydrocarbon of two series of steroids (pregnant)
PREMUNITION infection immunity (premonition)
PROBANG a slender, flexible rod (probing)
PROSECTOR one who prepares material for dissections (prospector)
PROTENITY time attribute of a mental process (propensity)
PYKNIC of short, stocky built (picnic)
QUITTOR a fistulous tract in an injured horse (quitter)
REFLUX a backward flow (reflex)
RISUS a laugh (rises)
RUBER red (rubber)
SACRAC toward the pelvic sacral bone (sacred)
SALIT salicylic-acid ester of borneol for gout (salt, split)
SARCOTIC causing an increase in flesh (narcotic)
SCRAPIE a disease in sheep and goats (scrape)
SELLAR relating to a cranial sella turcica (seller, cellar)
Splenoid resembling the spleen (splendid)
SPRUPE primary intestinal malabsorption (spruce, spree)
STAPEDIES plural of stapes, adulatory small bone (stampedes)
STOMACACE canker sores in the mouth (stomach-ache)
STYVER a tampon (type)
SUCCESSION successive occurrence (succession)
SUDATION sweating (sudation)
SUGAR to fuse (sugar)
SYCOSIS inflammation (sycosis)
TACTOR organ (actor)
TERPIN a cypress oil (terpin)
TETTER eruption (tetter)
TEXIS child-birth (texte)
THIASOSIS inflammation (thiasis)
TIQUEUR one who ticks (tiqeur)
TORMEN severe (torment)
TORMENTAL pert (torment)
TRANSFORMATION transformation (transformation)
TROPHESY result (trophes)
TRYPTIC relating to tryptophan (trypsin)
TUBBA foot yoke (tubba)
TUSSAL relating to a tick (tussle)
TYLERY a callus (tyre)
UBERTY fruitfulness (uberty)
UNCAL relating to a tick (uncal)
UREA carbamido (urine)
VACUOME a space (vacuum)
VASAL relating to a tick (vasal)
VENENATION poisoning (venenate)
WHEAL acute swelling (wheal)

There are instances that look misspelled, including "toward" in "neurad, orad" and "toward" in "neurad, orad" as well as "syan, galley" and "syan, galley". Further pseudomedicalese, including "-10, as well as sodium, acetylene, as anxiety, and so on."

Of course, medical word creation is not simple, and it requires you to synthesize and manipulate the meaning of the terms involved.
SUCCESSION shaking, as a diagnostic procedure (succession)
SUDATION sweating (sedation)
SWAGE to fuse suture thread to a needle (sewage, wage)
SYCOSIS inflammation of facial hair follicles (psychosis)
TACTOR organ of touch (tractor, factor)
TERPIN a cyclic terpene alcohol (terratin)
TETTER eruption, as in ringworm or eczema (teeter, totter, letter)
TEXIS child-bearing (taxis)
THESAUROSIS abnormal body storage of foreign objects (thesauruses)
TIPIC one suffering from a tic (liqueur)
TORMEN severe colic (torment)
TORMINAL pertaining to tormen (terminal)
TRANSFORMATION perforation of a fetal skull base (transformation)
TROPHESYY results of a trophic nerve disorder (prophesy)
TRYPTIC relating to tryptin (cryptic, triptych)
TUBBA foot yaws (tuba)
TUSSAL relating to a cough (tussle)
TYLE a callus (tile, type)
UBERTY fruitfulness (puberty)
UNCAL relating to a hook-shaped body (uncle)
UREA carbamide (area)
VACUOME a system of vacuoles (vacuum)
VASAL relating to an anatomic duct (vassal, basal)
VENATION poisoning (vation)
WHEAL acute area of skin edema (wheel)

There are several classes of medical words that automatically look misspelled. One class is words ending in -AD, a suffix meaning "toward". Such pseudo-misspellings include CENTRAD, FORMAD, NEURAD, ORAD, RADIAD, TERMINAD. Another class is chemical substances that end in -IN, such as ARABIN, BLASTIN, DIGIN, EMULSIN, GALLEIN, INHIBIN, LININ, PYRAMIN, SKIMMIN, SYMPATHIN. Further pseudo-misspellings arise from the use of Latin terms in medicalese. Stedman's dictionary includes hundreds of terms ending in -10, such as ABLATIO, ACCRETIO, ACTIO and ADHESIO, as well as scores of terms ending in -ANS or -ENS, such as ABERRANS, ACCLERANS, ACCIDENS, and CONFLUENS, or -AS words such as ANXIETAS, EXTREMITAS, and GRAVITAS.

Of course, there are many pseudo-misspellings not involving medical words: Webster's yields specimens such as BLASTID, BOMBINATION, FASCINATION, ORCHESTIA, PORRECT, PRAISSES, RICTAL and TECNOLOGY. So, don't let the strange bombinations of teters lead you to sycosis. Your blastid doctors may be using the porrect notation of their technology. After all, they're only humin!