



## What's in an eponym?

Dermatology without eponyms?

Just long soporific synonyms?

'Keratosis follicularis'

Sounds like any dull dermatitis

But "Darier- White"

That sounds just right

The name and its history

Add to the charm and mystery

Honor our greats of yore

Hebra, Hutchinson, Hansen and more

And rarely a patient too we remember

Stories like that of Mrs. Mortimer

The apostrophe thus gains eminence

*Mortimer's* disease, it is, hence

'*Hansen's*' disease, it is not

Leprosy for sure he had not

But when you have a sign

Darier's and Gorlin's, then it's fine

There is a lot in a name, true

But quite a lot in punctuation too!

Eponyms in medicine was a point of discussion in a meeting held in 1975 to cover classification and nomenclature of morphological defects. The meeting was held at the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland, United States of America, and the recommendations from the same were published in *The Lancet*. One of the recommendations for conditions named after the scientists was that "the possessive use of an eponym should be discontinued, since the author neither had nor owned the disorder."<sup>1</sup> This obviously sounds logical, although it is not followed strictly in modern scientific literature. Rarely, diseases have been named after the patient(s) in whom it was first reported (like Lou Gehrig's disease named after a famous American baseball player or 'Mortimer's malady/disease', which is now considered to be a variant of cutaneous sarcoidosis, named after Mrs. Mortimer, a patient of Jonathan Hutchinson). In this context, the possessive use would be fine. However, the question of whether or not to use eponyms at all, is a larger debate which is likely to continue ad infinitum!

### Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

### **Feroze Kaliyadan**

Department of Dermatology, Sree Narayana Institute of Medical Sciences, Kochi, Kerala, India

### **Corresponding author:**

Dr. Feroze Kaliyadan,  
Department of Dermatology, Sree Narayana Institute of Medical Sciences, Kochi, Kerala, India.  
ferozkal@gmail.com

### Reference

1. Classification and nomenclature of morphological defects. *Lancet* 1975;1:513.

**How to cite this article:** Kaliyadan F. What's in an eponym?. *Indian J Dermatol Venereol Leprol* 2022;88:578.

**Received:** July, 2021 **Accepted:** March, 2022 **Epub Ahead of Print:** May, 2022 **Published:** June, 2022

**DOI:** 10.25259/IJDVL\_709\_2021 **PMID:** 35593284

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, transform, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as the author is credited and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.