

Latin Grammar Headaches

The use of the English language for the exchange of scientific information has greatly contributed to the advancement of sciences in the last century. Latin, for many centuries the language of science, is unable to compete with a worldwide and living language such as English. However, the use of Latin in the binomial nomenclature introduced by C. von Linné retains its standing in taxonomy.

For those of us who studied, for many years and with difficulty, Latin at school, it has been difficult to accept the English pronunciation of Latin names of genera and species and the creation of doubtful Latin terms like “*longbeachae*.” What cannot be tolerated, however, is grammatical mistakes. I refer here to the name *Mycobacterium visibilis* proposed in the very interesting paper by Appleyard and Clark (1). The neuter form “*visibile*” should be used in conjunction with “*Mycobacterium*.”

REFERENCE

1. Appleyard, G. D., and E. G. Clark. 2002. Histologic and genotypic characterization of a novel *Mycobacterium* species found in three cats. *J. Clin. Microbiol.* **40**:2425–2430.

Enrico Tortoli*
*Regional Reference Center for Mycobacteria
Microbiology and Virology Laboratory
Careggi Hospital
Florence, Italy*

*Phone: 39 055 4279199
Fax: 39 055 4279830
E-mail: e.tortoli@libero.it

Authors' Reply

According to the *International Code of Nomenclature of Bacteria*, Rule 65 (2), “[g]eneric or subgeneric names which are modern compounds from two or more Latin or Greek words take the gender of the last component of the compound word” (2). The name we proposed for a novel mycobacterium (1) does not follow this rule, and we thank Dr. E. Tortoli for kindly pointing out the error. In the future, we shall use the neuter form “*visibile*,” as suggested.

REFERENCES

1. Appleyard, G. D., and E. G. Clark. 2002. Histologic and genotypic characterization of a novel *Mycobacterium* species found in three cats. *J. Clin. Microbiol.* **40**:2425–2430.
2. Lapage, S. P., P. H. A. Sneath, E. F. Lessel, V. B. D. Skerman, H. P. R. Seeliger, and W. A. Clark (ed.). 1992. *International code of nomenclature of bacteria* (1990 revision), p. 47. American Society for Microbiology, Washington, D.C.

G. D. Appleyard*
E. G. Clark
*Department of Veterinary Pathology
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada*

*Phone: (306) 966 7213
Fax: (306) 966 7244
E-mail: greg.appleyard@usask.ca