

## "COELIOTOMY," VERSUS "LAPAROTOMY," AS A SURGICAL TERM.

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GENTLEMEN: When you perform an abdominal section, and report the case; under what scientific term do you describe the operation? You probably call it a "Laparotomy," because hundreds of operators are in the habit of using the same word, or its synonym, in a dozen countries and languages.

Where did this term originate? You say it has a Greek derivation (the language of Greece having been the tongue of the first anatomists) and comes from two words, *lapara*; and *tomæ*, to eat. Now, what did the Greeks call the *lapara*? It was certainly never the abdomen.

Did you ever look carefully into an ancient Greek anatomy to find out what the abdomen was really called in their language? The word *belly* appears ten times in the English version of the New Testament; did you ever note that the original Greek has the word *koilia*, and never *lapara*, in these ten places?

Rufus, of Ephesus, a distinguished physician and writer, born A. D. 112, wrote a paper entitled "Names of the Parts of the Human Body," in which he has this significant sentence: "The *omphalos* (navel) is the hollow which occupies the middle of the *koilia*, where we cut the veins that nourish the fetus; the middle part of the hollow is the *akromphalon*" (top of the navel).

"Lapara" is a very old Greek term, and was applied in the time of Hippocrates to the parts between the short ribs and the iliac bone (the flank), and scores of old lexicographers have thus defined it. The operation for lumbar hernia, or laparocèle, was a true laparotomy; and so, also, is that of lumbar, or laparo-colotomy. The term *lapara* originally meant a hollow, and was for this reason applied by the early anatomists to *the hollow of the waist*. It was never used to designate a convexity.

The misapplication of the term "laparotomy" commenced in the year 1811 in the medical thesis of a Wittenberg student of the name of Fiedler, who wrote in Latin under the title "De Laparatomia." He had witnessed a true laparotomy performed, on October 17, 1810, upon a man of 50 with a diseased colon, as he lay on his right side. Fiedler wrote again in 1817, and took it upon himself to coin such distortions as "laparo-gastrotomia," "laparographia," and "laparo-hysterotomia"—his desire seeming to be to supplant the term "*gaster*," which really meant the belly, by the word "*lapara*," which a careful investigation would have taught him was not its Greek synonym. The mystery is how an error of this kind ever made the progress that it has in leading the medical world astray.

"*Koilia*" being the Greek word for abdomen, the natural synonym of gastrotomy in its old meaning is "coeliotomy," pronounced soft (se-le-otemy). This is not a new coinage except as to its terminal, for we have long had *coelio-paracentesis* for tapping the abdomen. The term coeliotomy has been adopted by Professor Sanger, of Leipzig; by Dr. J. Greig Smith, in his *Abdominal Surgery*; by Professors Keen and White, in their *Text-Book of Surgery*; and by a number of well known medical writers. This adoption gives us the compound terms *coelio-hysterotomy* (Cæsarean section), *coelio-hysterectomy* (exsection of uterus through the abdomen), *puerperal coelio-hysterectomy* (Porro-Cæsarean operation), *coelio-nephrectomy* (abdominal exsection of the kidney), etc.

What characterizes the present position of our condemned term is its wonderful tenacity to hold in the nomenclature of gynecological writers who have admitted the error of its application in abdominal surgery. Two years ago I published a classical pamphlet on the subject and sent it to prominent writers in thirty different countries. I also sent a copy to every Fellow of one of our leading national medical societies just before it met in annual session in 1890, and their letters attested its effect upon their sense of reason. It convinced them that *lapara* was not the abdomen and that *koilia* was; but it did not break up the habit of use, as shown by the fact that four papers entitled "laparotomy" appeared in their *Transactions* for 1891, and the term was time and again made use of throughout the volume, but no one said "coeliotomy" as much as once. The old rut is so easy to run in, and the laparotomy wheel will get in. It took eighty years to propagate the error, and it will take time to correct it.

Yours respectfully,

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