

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### **On the Translation of *Lobar* and *Lobectomy* Into Spanish: Here Comes the Wolf!**

#### **To the editor:**

Many authors have pointed out the importance of proper use of language in scientific publications.<sup>1</sup> The use of *lobar* and *lobectomía* is fairly widespread in Spanish, although incorrect in our opinion. A total of 26 articles published in ARCHIVOS DE BRONCONEUMOLOGÍA (January 1995-July 2004) included one or the other of these terms in the title or abstract. If we search other Spanish language medical journals (*Anales Españoles de Pediatría, Cirugía Española, Gastroenterología y Hepatología, Medicina Clínica, Medicina Intensiva, and Radiología*) the number rises to 75.

The origin of words related to the Spanish word denoting a lobe (*lóbulo*) is the Greek word *λοβός* (*lobós*),<sup>2</sup> which passed to Latin (*lobus*), in which language there is also the diminutive form *lobulus*. In English, the word *lobe* refers to a more or less well-defined portion of any organ.<sup>3</sup> Certain Spanish medical dictionaries do include the words *lobo* and *lobar*, but possibly because of the coincidence of the Spanish word for a certain carnivorous mammal (a wolf), *lóbulo* has become the usual noun for referring to portions of an organ.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, we feel the temptation to translate too literally from English.

Given that the noun approved for use in Castilian Spanish is *lóbulo* and not *lobo* (which conjures for all of us a fierce and furry image), we believe it necessary to point out that the correct translation of the English word *lobar* is *lobular* and that the translation of the English *lobular* is *lobulillar*.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, we consider that *lobulectomía* is a more appropriate word to use than *lobectomía*. And we will not enter into discussion of the term *lobitis*. Although some dictionaries accept it, it seems to evoke a notion of inflammation of the most savage side of our character.

**M. Maldonado, J. Mullol,  
and M. Bernal-Sprekelsen**

Servicio de Otorrinolaringología, Hospital  
Clínic, Barcelona, Spain.

1. Woodford FP. Sounder thinking through clearer writing. A graduate course on scientific writing can, if appropriately designed, strengthen scientific thinking. *Science*. 1967;156:743-5.
2. Diccionario manual griego-español. Barcelona: Vox; 1998.
3. Dorland's illustrated medical dictionary. 29th ed. Philadelphia: WB Saunders; 2000; p. 1022-3.
4. Diccionario terminológico de ciencias médicas. 3rd ed. Barcelona: Salvat; 1945.
5. Stedman bilingüe diccionario de ciencias médicas: inglés-español/español-inglés. Buenos Aires: Panamericana; 1999. p. 418.