

Superinfection

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36104/amc.2020.1858>

Some inappropriate uses of this term are heard in current medical jargon, such as superinfected COPD, superinfection of a venous ulcer, or superinfected varicose veins, diseases which are not normally infectious, although they may be complicated with a secondary infection. Understanding the etymology will help clear up the situation.

Superinfection: (Derived from *infection*):

1. A new infection in an individual previously affected by a different microbial pathogen.

Synonym: secondary infection.

Observation: Not to be confused with «reinfection» or «coinfection».

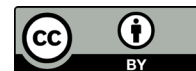
To reinforce its proper use, it is important to review the term from which it is derived: **Infection:** (From the latin *infic(ere)* ‘to stain’ + *-tiōnem* ‘corruption’; documented in French since 1314):

1. Entry, implantation and multiplication of a pathogenic microbe within the organism, with subsequent stimulation of the immune system, although it may not always cause disease.
2. Action or effect of infecting or being infected.

Therefore, the word «superinfection» and its derivatives only apply to infectious diseases; for example: bacterial superinfection of infectious skin lesions, hepatitis D superinfection in a patient with chronic hepatitis B infection, mycotic vaginitis following genital herpes, bacterial colitis associated with the use of antibiotics, etc.

Sources

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- *Mandel, Douglas and Bennett's. Principles and Practice of Infectious Diseases. Ninth Edition. Churchill Livingstone Elsevier. 2019*



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 Received: 03/V/2020 Accepted: 04/V/2020