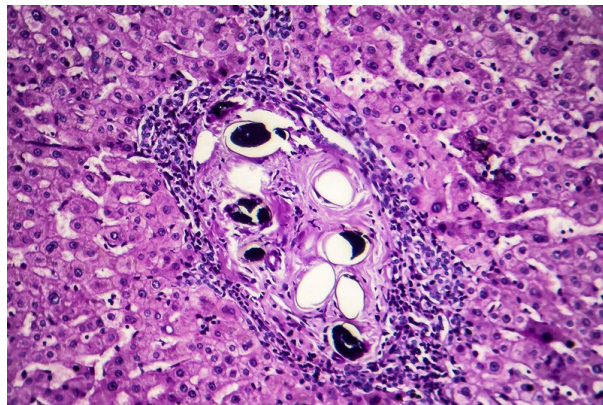


Word for Word

Suggestive, suspected, or suspicious?

In medicine, making inferences and drawing conclusions from observations is part of the job. When communicating these inferences and conclusions, it is important to be clear when they are based on evidence but are not yet established facts. Words we use to communicate this uncertainty include *suggestive, suspected, and suspicious*.

Suspicious describes the sense (but not certainty) that an observation or result is linked to a problem, diagnosis, or outcome. It can also describe something that arouses suspicion.



Examples

We were suspicious that the villagers' symptoms were caused by schistosomiasis.

The CT scan showed a suspicious lesion but was inadequate to confirm the diagnosis.

Suggestive describes something that implies or evokes. While a lesion or finding can be *suspicious*, the test that identified the lesion or finding is *suggestive*.

Examples

Incorrect: The chest x-ray was suspicious for sarcoidosis.

Correct: The chest x-ray was suggestive of sarcoidosis.

Because an explanation that is thought (but not known) to underlie a problem may be *suspected, suspect* or *suspected* is often used interchangeably with *suspicious*. However, it is considered incorrect to say a lesion is *suspect*;

suspicious is the correct term. As a verb, *to suspect* is to infer a cause, but again with a sense of uncertainty.

Examples

The suspected disease-causing mutations were screened for frequency of occurrence.

We suspect that the lesion is a squamous cell carcinoma, but a biopsy is needed to confirm it.

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