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## referral, *n.*

**Pronunciation:** Brit. /rɪ'fɜːrəl/ , /rɪ'fɜːrɪ/ ,

U.S. /rə'fərəl/ , /ri'fərəl/

**Etymology:** < REFER *v.* + -AL *suffix*<sup>1</sup>. Compare earlier REFERMENT *n.*, REFERENCE *n.*

*rare* before 20th cent.

**1.** The action or an act of referring something or *to* something; a reference; *spec.* the passing on to a third party of personal information concerning another.

1790 J. H. BEATTIE *Ess. & Fragments* (1794) III. 295 Instead of reference, preference, commitment..say *referral*, *preferral*..and the *transferral* of property, instead of the transferring of property.

1867 *N. Amer. Rev.* Oct. 530 The over-ready referral to a Sanskrit root.

1943 *Sun* (Baltimore) 27 Nov. 6/3 The publication by Senator Butler of his report and his referral of it to the Truman Committee.

1969 *Ithaca* (New York) *Jrnl.* 27 Nov. 32/2 The name of the woman..was apparently given secretly to the..company by one of her friends, who was paid for the 'referral' with a vaporizer or other small appliance.

1981 *Times* 10 Mar. 18/6 The senior management of these businesses comes out well from these referrals.

2006 M. W. JACKSON *Harmonious Triads* vii. 187 Chronometrical markings might ensure a beat based on the universal standard of time, replacing the constant referral to vague terms, such as *andante*, *allegro*, and *presto*.

**2.** Chiefly *Med.*

**a.** The referring of an individual (or his or her case) to an expert, specialist, etc., for consideration; *spec.* the directing of a patient, usually by a general practitioner, to a consultant or institution for specialist treatment. Freq. *attrib.* Cf. REFER *v.* 5.

- 1920 J. C. FARIES *Three Yrs. Work Handicapped Men* 58 The field work department strives..to facilitate referrals of cases likely to need the services of the Institute.
- 1933 *Economica* 41 327 No rules have been laid down by the Clinic as to the age of children to be referred, problems for referral, etc.
- 1944 *Amer. Jrnl. Surg.* 65 67 (caption) Patient had an unsuccessful curettage prior to her referral.
- 1955 D. M. DEED in C. MORRIS *Social Case-Work in Great Brit.* (ed. 2) iii. 70 At the time of referral [to a family caseworker] the child was in a temporary hostel.
- 1972 *Where* May–June 136/3 He can go to his family doctor who will either examine him and take the necessary tests to establish the diagnosis before giving treatment, or will send him to the nearest hospital clinic with a letter of referral.
- 1991 R. RENDELL *Kissing Gunner's Daughter* (1992) xiv. 177 All inmates came to Royal Oak on referral, usually the recommendation of a prison Senior Medical Officer.
- 2007 *Health Policy* 80 18/2 Policy objectives for the future focus on waiting for diagnostic tests and times from referral to treatment.

**b.** A person who has been referred to a particular specialist, institution, employer, etc.

- 1956 *Amer. Sociol. Rev.* 21 319/2 Twenty-four of the thirty-three referrals were committed to correctional or mental institutions as juveniles following Clinic contact.
- 1963 *Chicago Tribune* 6 Oct. (Mag. section) 60/2 She was a referral from another city.
- 1994 *Midwest Home & Design* Summer 44/2 If none is satisfactory, interview three more referrals.
- 2001 B. BROADY *In this Block there lives Slag* 132, I always asked out-of-town referrals if they'd come across a social worker called Hilary.

**3. Med.** The attribution of pain to a specific site, esp. one distant from its real origin; the transmission of pain from the site of origin to or into another site.

- 1938 J. O. MCCALL *Fund. of Dentistry in Med. & Public Health* vii. 92 When the pulp becomes infected...it..gives rise to certain characteristic symptoms. These

are briefly: 1. Sharp, lancinating, intermittent pain... Referral of pain (frequently) to another tooth on the same side of the center line [etc.].

- 1971 *Progr. in Cardiovascular Dis.* **13** 508 There may be overflow, or spread, at these spinal cord segments causing the phenomenon of somatic referral of pain to parts of the body whose sensory supply enters at the same spinal cord segment.
- 2001 S. MENSE et al. *Muscle Pain* iv. 84/2 Pain referral between seemingly normal muscles can be elicited in a relatively high proportion of healthy subjects.

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## COMPOUNDS

General *attrib.*, esp. in sense 2a.

- 1920 A. Y. REED & W. WOELPPER *Junior Wage Earners* v. 145 Who is the referral clerk? The counselor or a second person who specializes in that phase of employment service?
- 1966 *Lancet* 24 Dec. 1403/1 The referral system, whereby consultants see patients only at the request of the family doctor, came into being at the end of the 19th century.
- 1968 *World Med.* 26 Nov. 35/1 The referral diagnosis was Addison's disease.
- 1978 *Times* 2 Nov. 14/2 They [*sc.* the Samaritans] can, and do, act as a medical or psychiatric referral agency.
- 1984 *Jrnl. Substance Abuse Treatm.* **2** I. 14/1 The main referral questions revolved around issues of drug-induced atypical organic brain syndrome versus general low intellectual ability.
- 1989 V. R. GODWIN in M. G. Field *Success & Crisis in National Health Syst.* ix. 269 Systematic linkages and referral patterns between primary, secondary, and tertiary level services.

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This entry has been updated (OED Third Edition, September 2009).

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