Beat: Health

Vaccine, word of the year in Spanish

According to the Fundeu-RAE

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USPA NEWS - Every year-end, the Royal Spanish Academy of the Language (RAE) chooses the word that, in its opinion, should bear the title of "word of the year." Novelty, relevance, and other considerations are taken into consideration when choosing the winning word. This 2021, the "word of the year" in the Spanish language is "vaccine".

The Fundación del Español Urgente (Fundeu, in its Spanish acronym), promoted by the EFE Agency and the Royal Spanish Academy, explained the choice of "vaccine" ("vacuna" in Spanish language) as "word of the year" in Spanish: "In addition to its great presence in the social, political, scientific and economic debate, the Foundation has selected it for its linguistic interest. The concept of a vaccine arose in the 18th century as a result of the discovery by the English doctor Edward Jenner that those infected by cowpox or bovine pox were protected against to human smallpox. In Spanish, vaccina (created from the Latin vaccinus, that is, 'from the cow') was used for a time, but it ended up imposing a vacuna, which appears for the first time in the Dictionary of the RAE in 1803, although not with its current meaning, which was included in 1914."

"This voice and its derivatives, such as vaccination or vaccinated, have been present throughout the Spanish-speaking world this year, either in isolation or as part of more extensive constructions: booster vaccine, mass vaccination point, vaccination schedule... It is about a word that has even motivated the appearance of neologisms, new concepts such as "vacunódromo" (formed with the cultured base -dromo, which refers to a large space destined for specific purposes) or "vacuguagua" (acronym for vaccination and guagua)," adds the Fundeu.

"The Fundeu-RAE has dedicated numerous recommendations to it during 2021, several of them focused on its confusion with other terms, such as serum, antidote or immunization. Likewise, its use with certain verbs has raised doubts (inoculate is a generic term to refer to administering a vaccine, while injecting refers to a specific way of doing it.) Other related voices have also featured in recommendations and consultations from the Foundation this year, such as trypanophobia ('irrational fear of injections') or herd immunity (to refer to the theory that if the majority of a population is immunized against a virus, this group will provide indirect protection to the unvaccinated)."

The words related to the coronavirus grouped together an important part of the candidates for word of the year of the Fundeu-RAE of 2021, as it already happened in 2020. In addition to vaccine, among those chosen were denier and variant. Two others were related to the way the pandemic has altered our lives: shortages and camping. The other candidates alluded to the environment (eco-anxiety, carbon neutrality), technology (metaverse, cryptocurrency) and other current issues (fajana, megawatt, Taliban).

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