Hand-held computers in health care: What software programs are available?

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Abstract:
The technology sector of healthcare is entering a new evolutionary phase. The medical community has an obligation to the public to provide the safest, most effective healthcare possible. This is more achievable with the use of computer technology at the point of care, and small, portable devices could fulfill this role. A Modern Physician/PricewaterhouseCoopers 2001 survey on information technology in Physician practices found that 60% of respondents say that physicians in their organisation use PDAs, compare this with 26% in the 2000 technology survey. This trend is expected to continue to the point where these devices will have their position on a physician's desk next to their stethoscope. Once this electronic evolution occurs, the practice of medicine will change. Doctors will be able to practice medicine with greater ease and safety. In our opinion, the new generation of PDA mobile devices will be the tools to enable a transformation of healthcare to a paperless, wireless world.

This article focuses on uses for PDAs in health care. Healthcare software is categorised into the following groups; reference/text book, calculators, patient management/logbook and personal clinical/study notebook. With a focus on the healthcare audience (the user), which can be registrar, consultant, nurse, student, teacher, patient, medical director and surgical.

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Health care has been in a constant upgrade mode for a long time now. In recent years, with the introduction of computers, the advancements have become more rapid. Computers help in not just supporting the needs of physician, nurse or care giver, but the needs of patients as well. The main purpose of computer systems is in the collection of health data in a manner that is as usable as possible so that it can be analyzed and manipulated to improve the current care process. Health care from its paper based system has today become almost exclusively electronic/computer based. Electronic health records make it easier for medical professionals to record, retrieve and manage patient data for accurate diagnoses. Nurses often perform routine health assessments such as blood pressure, oxygen levels and even EKGs. Recording the results of these assessments is more accurate when nurses have the technological skills that enable them to save the readings electronically and to store them in a patient’s electronic health record. Nurses now use electronic health records to record and review prescribed medications. They also use software programs and apps to manage patient medications. These programs and apps help nurses not only avoid medication errors, they also prevent unintended drug interactions. Computer use is so common in the health care field (with some hospitals having a computer in literally every room) that sometimes special cleaning care has to be taken. Computer keyboards especially may transmit bacteria and disease, which can be deadly if the computer is in an operating room. Therefore it becomes very important that computer keyboards are frequently sanitized and kept clean so that there is as little risk as possible. References. Premier Inc: Computers and Electronics in Health Care. Ahrq: Using Computers to Advance Health Care. UNC Health Care: Computer Keyboards in Health C...