

Apps, tablets and smartphones

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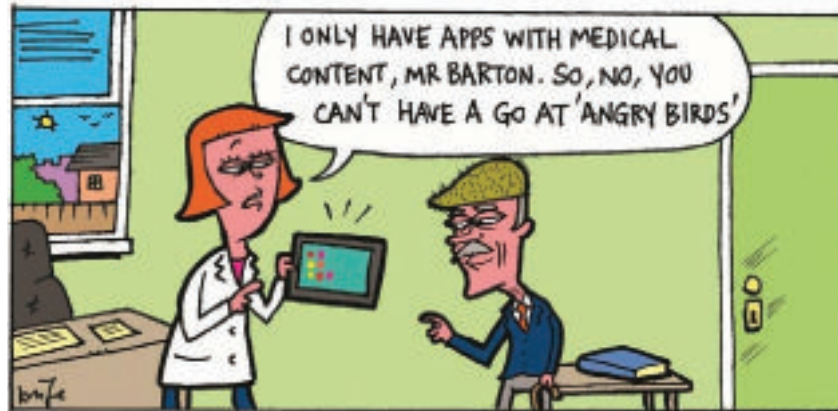
It was just under a year ago that I unpacked my newly purchased iPad and set it up. I thought I would find it useful but since purchase I have found it invaluable. Of course there are other forms of tablet computers around but I think my experiences of using a tablet computer can apply to the number of different types and brands available on the market today.

Portability and ease of use make tablet computers and smartphones handy to a busy healthcare professional. Internet access when connected to a Wi-Fi network or a mobile connection via a 3G service for example can be very helpful.

Email and web access is now a standard facility that many of us use on a daily basis. Through that we can communicate with colleagues and receive communications (sometimes too many) whilst the web allows access to a vast collection of medical journals, medical textbooks and other knowledge based and educational aids. Some of them are freely available whilst others are behind a pay wall which requires a subscription.

It has now moved on a stage further thanks to the increasing use of smartphones, tablets and that trendy word “apps” These apps (or more specifically “application software”) are designed for both the device and operating system but they carry out a certain and often specific task. Every day, new apps come on stream and of course there are plenty of medical apps available.

One of the best medical



apps I have come across is the Medscape app. Not only is it free (always a bonus) but there is a lot of impressive content available. Even better, it is available for many common devices. It is a US app so not everything is applicable to practice here in the UK.

If you want UK content then you won't go wrong with the British Medical Journal (BMJ) app which can be found on the Newsstand (for the Apple mobile operating system such as the iPad). The BMJ is the first academic medical journal to appear on the newsstand and I am sure others will join it soon including the GM Journal app which launches this month.

This trend towards digital provision of key medical content will have a significant impact on the way we access knowledge and record our activities (such as updating appraisal and revalidation information). Maybe one day, we will all be reading digital editions of all journals on our tablets as opposed to the traditional paper based versions. “The Economist” reported

that electronic sales of its publication had just hit one hundred thousand.

Taking this a step further, it was recently disclosed that doctors could be prescribing health based apps which can help the patient with their medical problems.¹

Although we have witnessed a huge change in the way we handle data, knowledge and communications, it is likely that we will witness even more change in the coming years. According to a recent article published in American Medical News² “by 2016, three million patients worldwide will be using remote monitoring devices that use a smartphone as a hub to transmit information.” We are only at the beginning of an amazing technological revolution, there is much more to come.

The GM Journal free app launches this month. For further details go to www.gerimed.co.uk

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-17111092>
2. <http://www.ama-assn.org/amednews/2012/02/20/bisb0220.htm>