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When I read of the phenomenal sales of smartphones,^{1,2,3} I was astounded. I could not have imagined owning a smartphone myself, just ten years ago!

With such an overwhelming response to the adoption of smartphones, I have no excuse for not using it to enhance my medical practice.

Since I decided to become a GP in 1990, my goal has always been to practise good primary care medicine and to improve the standard and recognition of general practice. I have been struggling to find a solution to facilitate and augment the standard and quality of my clinical practice. Eventually, last year, I was able to utilise a mobile app software to put my thoughts into actual practice.

I am happy to share what I have done and hope that you will benefit from it, and perhaps gain the knowledge to design your own app to meet your practice's needs.

The app that has been created allowed me to share contents such as written articles, web links and videos. It also allowed me to create forms for collecting information, and I could access any information available on the Internet. I could also initiate a phone call with a single tap of the finger. For example, by tapping on the link for an emergency ambulance, it automatically puts the call through without the need for dialling.

How has it enhanced my medical practice?

Uploading my curriculum vitae in the app. By doing so, I hope that my patients would be able to know more about me: my training, qualifications, continual medical education and contributions in the area of my professional interest. I could also keep my portfolio updated or add on to it without much difficulty. Perhaps all trainees and even medical students could use it as a versatile tool to build their training portfolios.

Providing web links to healthcare establishments. This was for my patients' ease of access to specific pages, such as queue cameras in A&E departments or polyclinics, which would be useful to them.

Creating forms for collection of information before consultation. This allowed me to collect some relevant information such as a patient's chronic illnesses or drug allergies before he/she enters the consultation room, thus allowing more time for face-to-face communication during the consultation. It also allowed me to be more thorough in history-taking.

Sharing useful materials. I was able to put up selected useful health education materials, found in online websites

or videos for my patients. Special instructions for patients could also be stored in PDF files for their reference and printed out for reading when necessary.

Availing easy communication.

Patients were able to email questions for clarification and book appointments for their subsequent visits.

What are the pros and cons?

The pros

- It allowed me to reach out to my patients in a novel way, by giving them a source of information about their healthcare provider and healthcare issues.
- It allowed me to communicate with my patients. For instance, I was able to alert them to any health-related issues, such as the Zika virus outbreak, via instant messaging. Other useful information may be left in the app for regular access.
- An eCommerce setup allowed ease of payment for the sale of products and services, doing away with heavy and cumbersome terminals and printers that were previously in use.

- It facilitated easy dissemination of information, whether personal, business- or health-related, via PDF files, weblinks and videos.
- Feedback, email contacts and appointment-making features allowed ease of two-way communication.


The cons


- The inertia, effort and cost needed to effect change and adopt the new technology can be stressful.
- The lack of time, energy and resources did not provide the luxury of being innovative.
- A lack of evidence of the benefits and acceptance by peers and patients.
- Fear of the unknown.
- New challenges such as confidentiality, ethical, copyright and cyber security issues.

In the end, it will be the individual doctor's decision whether to adopt or reject this new reality. However, I find it fulfilling enough to just allow me to enhance communication with my patients. ♦

The following apps are available for download with the links provided:


A Life Clinic

 <https://appsto.re/sg/nXsL8.i>

 <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.create.app.v2.novnamedicalcenter>

Health Information SG

 <https://appsto.re/sg/omJjab.i>

 <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.create.app.v2.sghealthinfo>

References

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3. *U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015.* Available at: http://www.pewinternet.org/files/2015/03/PI_Smartphones_0401151.pdf.