

## Reinventing Practice: Technology that works?



Like many of you, I enjoy going to the Academy's Annual Scientific Assembly to renew friendships, participate in CME, and learn where our specialty is heading. Between these activities, I also enjoy wandering the exhibit hall to see what's new—devices to ease vasectomies, the latest depression therapy, an innovative contraceptive agent.

Among my favorite booths to browse (after securing the requisite Dove bar to fortify me on my quest) are the technology companies. Another killer electronic medical record (EMR), a "smart" wireless system to transmit prescriptions, a new PDA product—it's better than cruising the aisles of Home Depot (this must be a "guy thing").

**Technology living up to its promise?** Two thoughts struck me this year at the Assembly in New Orleans. First, it is amazing how few technology vendors have made it 5 years running. Whether due to bankruptcy, merger, or simply outdated technology (how could anyone market a DOS-based product today?), the turnover rate of vendors is remarkable.

Second, it appears we are on the verge of having truly functional EMR: problems lists that update automatically, useful templates, links to prescribing services. And more PDA programs are fulfilling the promise of their features—whether advising on prescriptions or coding more accurately, these programs give me more reason to update my Palm.

Moreover, some of these products may save time. (I am enduringly skeptical of vendors who claim I will be financially ahead by turning our offices and workflow upside down.) Overall, my impression is that we *are* on the cusp of technology revolutionizing medicine.

**JFP's bead on technology.** Our new feature, "Reinventing Practice," edited by Gary Fox, described an exciting evidence resource, UpToDate, in the September 2003 issue. Future subjects will include an examination of PDxMD and major EMR systems that may enhance practice and streamline care. Let us know what your experiences, both good and bad, have been.

Whether you are a solo physician in rural practice, or a member of a 500-person multispecialty group, I urge you to see what the latest in technology has to offer your practice. Just don't expect every vendor you meet to be at the following year's Assembly.

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