Reviewer's report

Title: How residents and interns utilise and perceive the personal digital assistant and UpToDate

Version: 2 Date: 29 February 2008

Reviewer: Scott Strayer

Reviewer's report:

Overall, the revisions submitted by the authors significantly strengthen this paper as a descriptive study of resident and intern use of PDA and UpToDate. All previous revision suggestions have been skillfully addressed in this version. Please address the following items that are present in this revision:

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. Please address basic items of survey development. For example, how were the questions designed? Were they reviewed by any colleagues or other experts for content validity? Did other colleagues review for face validity? Was it tested in a pilot sample to make sure all questions were easy enough to answer, that the time was less than 10 minutes as designed, etc.? This does not have to be an exhaustive validation or necessarily contain quantitative psychometric validation, but at the very least please describe these basic survey design issues to ensure that validity issues of the survey are addressed.

2. Table 5 appears to have a typographical error in that median time spent using the PDA for the 23 respondents who used both UpToDate and a PDA is listed as 1.0 hr (0-14), but in the text describing this usage, it is listed as 0.5 hr (0-14 hours).

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. The sentence "However, a direct comparison of their utility in doctors who used both UpToDate and PDAs downloaded with medical software is more meaningful" should be moved to the discussion section. Simply report the results from that sub-group in the results section.

2. I still find it strange that the median use per week of PDA is reported as 0 hours for all users. It seems to contradict the 0.5 hours that is seen in PDA users. Is a more meaningful number possible if the PDA use is reported in minutes?

3. The following sentence: "Regardless, these doctors rated UpToDate as more useful than PDAs for acquiring medical information, again emphasizing the need for medical software support for PDAs" is not supported by the data. It would be better to say "..", which might have been due to lack of medical software support for PDAs or something to that effect.

Discretionary Revisions:
1. Change this sentence: "Not all but 93 doctors (69.4%) were aware that our hospital had an institutional subscription to UpToDate. Only 4 doctors (3.0%) had a personal subscription to UpToDate." To this: "Only 93 doctors (69.4%) were aware that our hospital had an institutional subscription to UpToDate. Of these, 4 doctors..."

**What next?**: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest**: An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English**: Acceptable

**Statistical review**: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests**:

I have received speaker’s honoraria from UpToDate on 2 occasions and have received Palm products as part of the HealthCare experts group at Palm, Inc.