



## **BUSINESS**

### **Older doctors embracing tablets faster than younger counterparts**

They say portability and the depth of information have led to adoption rates that exceed any other technology.

**By PAMELA LEWIS DOLAN, amednews staff. Posted July 18, 2011.**

Adoption of new technology is no longer a trend found only among younger doctors.

A survey by QuantiaMD shows that physicians who have been in practice 31 years or more are about as likely as those fresh out of medical school to own a tablet computer or plan to purchase one.

Mary Modahl, chief communications officer for QuantiaMD, was surprised to see that adoption of tablet computers was less age-dependent than other technologies, including smartphones. "The tablet is definitely a unique beast in the zoo of technologies," she said.

The survey of 3,798 physicians by QuantiaMD, an online learning collaborative, found that 19% of doctors in practice 31 years or more use a tablet in their work. An additional 25% said it's extremely likely they will get one in the future.

Among physicians in practice less than 10 years, 20% use a tablet and 38% said it's extremely likely they'll obtain one.

Modahl said older physicians might see more uses for tablets than other mobile devices.

In the early years of smartphones, she said, the applications developed for them were geared more toward the younger generation -- things like texting and buying music from iTunes definitely appealed to a younger audience.

But tasks such as surfing the Internet and emailing are functions all generations find helpful, and the older generation finds it a lot easier to accomplish those tasks with a screen and keyboard larger than ones found on a smartphone.

The survey also found that, among all physicians using smartphones and tablets, 29% said they own an iPad compared with 3% who own an Android tablet.

Among those who intend to buy a mobile device in 2011, 27% want to buy an iPad and 7% plan to purchase an Android tablet.

#### **The intimidation factor**

Frank Kempf, MD, 58, a cardiologist at Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia, considers himself an early adopter of technology.

However, he said many older physicians tend to shy away from new technology, because they are not used to working with the devices and they can be intimidating.

That hasn't been the case for the iPad, he said.

"The learning curve of the device is quite advantageous," he said.

Dr. Kempf purchased his first iPad soon after his electronic medical records vendor released an app to allow him to access patient records from the device.

Dr. Kempf discovered that he could use the tablet as a reference tool to access the drug reference tool Epocrates.

The Philadelphia cardiologist also finds the tablet to be a useful patient education tool. With the device, he shows patients high-resolution images of their hearts to explain what is wrong or to review treatment options.

The availability of a variety of information, as well as the ease of inputting data, "will ultimately be the game-winning part of the technology" that will lead more physicians his age to adopt it, Dr. Kempf said.

#### **Easier access to more information**

W. Randolph Chitwood, MD, 65, director of the East Carolina Heart Institute at Pitt County Memorial Hospital and East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., thinks the tablet computer will replace the laptop in hospitals and physician practices. He said users can do more with the tablet -- both professionally and personally.

Even though tablets are less cumbersome to carry than a laptop, making it easier to haul from the clinic to the hospital and back again, Dr. Chitwood made it easier to tote around by having a seamstress sew what he calls an "iPocket" into his lab coat.

Two-thirds of the physicians surveyed who own a tablet say they use it for both professional and personal tasks.

On the professional side, 69% look up medication and treatment reference material. Only 20% access patient information and records through the device.

But that may change as physician demand grows. Modahl said that when physicians were asked what they would like to use their tablets for, the No. 1 answer was accessing EMRs.

For Steven Rothenberg, MD, 52, chief of pediatric surgery at the Rocky Mountain Hospital for Children in Denver, Global Care Quest, an iPad application that provides remote access to patient data, led to his initial interest in buying the device.

Developed at the University of California at Los Angeles, the GCQ technology lets physicians look at a patient's medical record, including imaging and lab results and clinical notes from other physicians, through a tablet or smartphone.

"The biggest thing is, as a physician, we are dependent on information to function," Dr. Rothenberg said. "And anything like the combination of GCQ and mobile that gives us information in a faster and easier way is so good and relatively straightforward."

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

**WEBLINK**

"Tablets Set to Change Medical Practice," QuantiaMD, June 15 ([www.quantiamd.com/q-qcp/quantiamd\\_research\\_tabletsettochangemedicalpractice.pdf](http://www.quantiamd.com/q-qcp/quantiamd_research_tabletsettochangemedicalpractice.pdf))

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