



Handheld computers are fun, sometimes even useful

The role of computers in our daily lives persistently grows, and whether we like it or not, they are here to stay. The latest incarnation of cyber-tech is the handheld computer, or palmtop, as it is sometimes called. In this issue (page 840), Dr. Peter Embi discusses the progression of these devices toward increasing power and memory and ultimately severing their umbilical linkages to their more sedentary cousins, the PCs. It is possible to have in our pocket a medical textbook, a PDR-like drug compendium, a medical calculator, today's newspaper, a medical journal, etc, etc, all in one small device. Amazing!

We physicians tend to be early adopters of new technology, and handhelds are the latest new toy. Trust me, they are fun to play with, and once in a while you can even do something useful with them. But Dr. Martin Harris, the Cleveland Clinic's intrepid chief information officer, warns us that although we have come a long way from the days of the Apple Newton, handhelds still fall considerably short of fulfilling their potential to help us get through the practice day (see page 854). Remember Alexander Pope's admonition from his *Essay on Criticism* (1711):

*Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.*

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