GIMEDIA REVIEW

Title of Program: ePocrates Rx 6.0

Type of Program: ePocrates is a commercial program for personal digital assistants.

Cost: There is no cost for this version of the program. You will be asked to register as a user prior to downloading. (ePocrates also makes a version for purchase called Rx Pro, cost at time of review \$49.99 per year.)

Reference Information: The web site for downloading ePocrates is www.epocrates.com.

Intended Audience: ePocrates is aimed at nurses and health care practitioners involved in clinical care.

Description: ePocrates is a drug reference program containing information on over 2,800 medications currently available here in the United States. On opening ePocrates, four tabs appear at the top of the screen with a list of drugs in alphabetical order underneath. Two of the tabs are not functional in the free version (alternative medications and tables) and the fourth tab only contains doc alerts (in the for-purchase version, ePocrates ID, an antibiotic program, and med math are also available). The box in the lower right corner of the screen switches the screen to the class page, allowing users to look for drugs under medication classes (for example Allergy). Select a particular drug and the recommended adult dosing schedule appears (the default screen can be changed). Other information such as pediatric indications and dosing, contraindications/cautions, adverse reactions, mechanism of action, formularies, black box safety information (including pregnancy and lactation safety) and pricing can be accessed by selecting the arrow in the left lower corner.

ePocrates Rx includes several functions to ease clinical practice. Different insurance company formularies can be downloaded from the ePocrates web site at no cost. These formularies allow the user to determine the prescription tier, preapproval requirements and alternatives for particular drugs. A multicheck function, located in the right lower corner of the screen, allows easy checking for cross-reactions among different medications. A search function is accessible by touching the left upper corner of the screen. Users can create their own list of favorite or frequently used medications by touching the individual drug name at the top of the screen and then adding it to their category of choice. To edit favorite categories, touch the upper right corner of the screen. Each drug monograph contains a notes page for adding memos about that medication.

Evidence Base: The company website states that the drug information is based on evidence from "gold

standard" drug information compendia, medical texts, specialty references, consensus guidelines, primary literature, and clinical experts. Specific texts and journal articles are not listed. All monographs are developed by ePocrates consulting editorial board, which includes both physicians and pharmacologists from private practice and university settings and is listed on the web page.

Frequency of Update: ePocrates includes an auto update feature that allows you to receive updates about new medications and Food and Drug Administration alerts when you hotsync while connected to the web. The Food and Drug Administration MedWatch partners with ePocrates to send out drug updates to physicians. Updates are included with ePocrates Rx at no cost, and they recommend updating every week.

Limitations: Currently does not allow cost comparisons among drugs except by going to each individual drug page. Pediatric dosing page occasionally did not list recommended dosing amounts or schedules that were available on the Micromedex Healthcare Series. ePocrates is not compatible with memory expansion cards.

Ease of Use: The interface for ePocrates is easy to use and professional in appearance. The program is easy to download to desktop. The initial synchronization from desktop to PDA is prolonged (about 30–40 minutes), but future updates are quick.

PDA Operating System: ePocrates requires a Palm version 3.0 or greater operating system. Rx Pro, the for-purchase version, is available for the Windows CE personal digital assistant system.

Desktop Operating System: ePocrates must be downloaded to a desktop prior to synchronization with the PDA. Any of the following systems will support the initial download: Windows 95, Windows 98, Windows 2000, Windows ME, Windows NT 4.0 SP3 or higher, Windows XP, Mac OS (with StuffitExpander 5.0 installed). The auto update feature is not supported for Mac operating systems.

Memory Requirement: This program requires a minimum of 2.5 megabytes of memory on the personal digital assistant, and the company recommends loading on PDA devices with at least 8 MB of memory.

Additional PDA Programs Needed to Run Application: There are no additional programs needed to run this program.

DENISE BONDS, MD, MPH, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, NC.