Preface

Technology and Health Information in Colorectal Surgery

Scott R. Steele, MD¹

¹ Division of Colon and Rectal Surgery, Department of Surgery, Madigan Army Medical Center, Fort Lewis, Washington

Clin Colon Rectal Surg 2013;26:3–4.

The manner in which medicine is practiced is constantly changing. No more so is this evident than in the use of technology, and health information technology, specifically, in the clinical, research, and practice management arenas. Whereas “apps,” telemedicine, and simulation were once far-away concepts, they are now commonplace in everyday care; and in some cases, a required component of surgical training. Online clinical decision support tools allow the physician point-of-care access to help determine individualized treatment plans and outcome estimations based on patient- or tumor-specific variables. Furthermore, the electronic medical record has not only changed the way we chart and communicate, but also allows closer tracking of practice patterns and patient outcomes, while highlighting potential coding and reimbursement issues. These advances have also allowed worldwide secure access to patient data and hospital resources, “24–7” availability of online medical libraries, and in many cases, done away with the days of late-night sifting through paper charts for a research project. Our complex relationship with the medical industry underscores addition-

al issues such as our reliance upon them for the development of instrumentation to “advance” surgery, provide funding for clinical trials and meetings, yet maintaining a healthy skepticism of how much these new products are truly accomplishing their intended goal. Whether this incorporation of technology is viewed as a detriment or blessing, it is assuredly here to stay. As such, surgeons should have a basic familiarity with each of these elements—even including how a “tweet” or other social media outlets can help market a practice or enhance efficiency.

I would like to personally thank each of the authors for taking time away from their busy practices and families to explore the ever-evolving role of technology in medicine, and how these changes affect us as surgeons both now and potentially in the future. I am grateful for their candor in not only discussing the positive aspects, but the inherent limitations as well. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my sincere appreciation to Dr. David Beck for giving me the opportunity to put together this volume. I hope the readers will find this as intriguing and helpful as I have.

Address for correspondence
 Scott R. Steele, MD, Division of
 Colon and Rectal Surgery,
 Department of Surgery, Madigan
 Army Medical Center, 9040a
 Fitzsimmons Dr., Fort Lewis, WA
 98431 (e-mail: harkersteele@me.
 com).

Issue Theme Technology and
 Health Information in Colorectal
 Surgery; Guest Editor, Scott R.
 Steele, MD.

Copyright © 2013 by Thieme Medical
 Publishers, Inc., 333 Seventh Avenue,
 New York, NY 10001, USA.
 Tel: +1(212) 584-4662.

DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.1055/s-0033-1333626>.
ISSN 1531-0043.