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Editorial

Are Medical Apps the future of medicine?

All medical professionals are programmed and oathed to deliver most effective, appropriate and timely medical and health care, do research and communicate information in verbal and print form. To attend these objectives doctors work very hard throughout their lives and to practice exact and up to date medicine they keep ready references viz. books, journals and use Internet. To hone their skills, one is required to use technology in terms of simulators and appropriate hard and soft wares. These references and technologies may not be available instantly at the point of care viz. ICUs, Ward, OPDs etc at the time of emergency. Today, even the society is required to know correct information about the disease and health with ease and accuracy. Medical and health care providers and seekers are duty bound to do no harm “Maleficence” and do only good “Beneficence” to the human beings and society. However, attaining these objectives is not easy at the point and time of need.

To meet the above objectives, it is essential that we must fully and instantly explore the fast developing Information and Smartphone technologies. The development and availability of Medical Apps has been a key milestone which can effectively change the medical world. A very large number of Medical Apps are available and many more get added every month reflecting the need and utility of them. However, there is likely to be flooding of Apps and information there in thus making it difficult for user to effectively select and use info.¹ The various smartphones have different operating systems (OS). The Medical Apps are specific to OSs, and hence all Apps may not be available on all smartphones with different OSs. One should have a smartphone at the earliest but before having, it is must to analyse the available Medical Apps on that brand and model of smartphone and the cost. At present, there will be a very few Medical Apps which will be available only on the latest model of that make and hence purchase of a model just prior to latest model shall essentially and comprehensively provide required Medical Apps at much lesser cost. At the time of acquiring smartphone one should also analyse total storage memory of the device, if there is relatively less memory and no add on memory card facility then one is programmed to only under explore the smartphone technology as use of various Apps and Podcast will consume significant memory space.

The process of acquiring Medical Apps is easy. Different OSs have their own Apps stores from where most of the Apps can be downloaded free and some at a very affording cost.

The Apps stores are like book stores and you can download Apps after analysing the authenticity and accuracy by reading reviews of the same.² Apps are available addressing to all possible domains of medical science viz. medical care, health care, medical education, training, research, medical literature, simulator, presentation and latest medical update etc. Apps are also available for almost all specialities in the field of medicine. In addition to Apps, smartphones also provide opportunity of virtually attending CMEs sitting in your room by downloading and playing podcasts which are audio-visual records of presentations held in the CMEs throughout the world. Thus Apps facilitate a medical student in acquiring knowledge of various subjects by utilising subject specific Apps, in skill development by providing various patient, investigation and procedure simulation Apps. There are also large numbers of Apps which help in grooming of a clinician addressing to history taking, examination, investigations and their interpretations and establishing a clinical diagnosis. Apps also facilitate in number of calculations required in clinical practice, thus helping in making a diagnosis, monitoring and prescription writing. Most importantly, they can also provide disease specific relevant, comprehensive information useful to all seekers viz medicals, paramedical, patients and society at large. As remembering the various drugs, dosages and interaction amongst various drugs is a herculean task and is fraught with scope of medical error, here in the availability of Apps on subjects of Pharmacopoeia, Posology, drug interactions, side effects and poisoning, FDA clearances, locally available generic and brand name of drugs are going to do yeoman service to the medical professionals. Today one is in an era of evidence based medicine and wants to refer to the latest evidence and guidelines on the disease before practicing clinical medicine, significantly useful Med Apps are available, some of them may be paid, they provide point of care most up to date and tailor made scientific information and thus facilitate in practice of desired medicine. In the field of Medical research, Med Apps help right from development of a research question, to study design, calculation of sample size and application of correct statistical tests and their interpretation. Availability of Med Apps of various journals make ease of access to their articles very easy, some of them permit to use their CMEs and even help in preparing for various medical professional examinations. Thus use of Med Apps will strongly facilitate publication probability by young doctors. In addition, there are Apps which prepare in

communication domain and facilitate in learning the science and skills of presentations with far reaching positive gains. At present, as their paucity of published data on the utility of Med Apps, one should read the reviews before putting the contents of Apps to clinical practice. It is also high time and may be the most opportune moment that young medical entrepreneurs may develop Med Apps which address to areas of their practice and being locally relevant to the region. This will open a new vista of medical innovation, research and practice. A guide to Med Apps in pediatrics is published in this issue.³

In addition to Med Apps, the Apps are available in other general domains viz utility, management, education, books, photography, social networking, music, productivity, health care and fitness, reference, life style, travel, maps, news and weather etc. Their appropriate use is going to be of immense help for the cause of medicine in some manner. Application of Apps is likely to make practice of telemedicine extremely easy with tremendous human gains. Apps also have a relevant scope of grooming doctors beyond their routine monotonous life and facilitate them to enjoy life in addition to practice of Noble and committed profession.

Therefore to conclude, it is high time that we, medical care providers, take lead and use Medical Apps forthwith and meet professional objectives of “No Maleficence and only Beneficence”. I feel it is mandatory to state that clinical medicine is supreme and will reign supreme. However, Medical Apps

should be used effectively and timely as facilitator and not replacement to clinical medicine.

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