

## A HITCHHIKERS GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF CYBERPALMISTRY

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The personal digital assistant or PDA as it is commonly called, has become an excellent tool for managing clinical information and accessing information at the point of care. There are many brands in the market and they are only good as electronic organizers until you download applications into it. The PDAs are also great for taking notes and keeping your daily schedules. Most of the PDAs run on either one of these two operating systems: Palm OS or Windows CE. Whichever system you choose, there are ready applications which can be downloaded. However, these two systems are absolutely incompatible with each other and no programs are available for interfacing the systems. Many of us use the Palm OS-based system as there are more Medical applications available.

### WHICH PDAS?

Which brand of PDA you choose will depend on what you want the PDA for. Most will come with built-in applications such as date book, clock, memo pad, address book, calculator, to do list and expense record. Some PDAs such as the Sony Clie and the Palm m505 comes with a colour screen. While this certainly looks good, it also means 'burning a bigger hole' in the pocket. It costs more and is useful if you want to store pictures and graphic files in it. However, at the present moment, it is not worth the price to pay for as the graphics capabilities are not that great.

The other thing that you have to consider is the memory. Most PDAs have a built-in memory of 8MB; this is insufficient if you intend to store large albums of photographs. Fortunately, most

manufacturers offer compact flash cards to increase the memory. There are many accessories that can be purchased to expand the capability of the PDA. For example, the Handspring model comes with optional accessories such as mobile phone, camera and modem for surfing the World Wide Web.



Figure 1: Handspring Visor Edge

### MEDICAL APPLICATIONS

Many useful applications are available for purchase or download from the World Wide Web. One of the best Medical databases available is the Epocrates Rx and ID. It provides adult and paediatric dosages of medications, indications, drug interaction, contraindication and adverse drug reactions. The Auto-update feature of this program automatically updates the databases from the epocrates website at the push of the button. It is free. All you need to do is to register at the site <http://www.epocrates.com>. However, it takes up about 1.5MB of space and the databases are for drugs in the United States. This can be quite different from that available locally.

All PDAs require a document reader to read .doc files. Some readers can be obtained free from the Net. However, these usually have limited storage. One such reader is the aortis reader.

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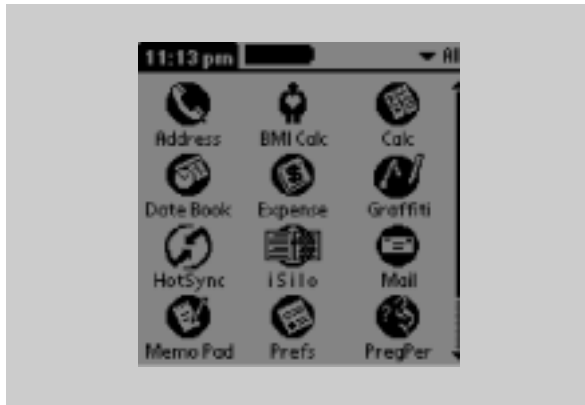


Figure 2: Applications

This can be obtained free-of-charge from the site: <http://www.aportis.com>. This application can only support up to a maximum of 7 documents. Its cousin, the aportis mobile, has no such limitation but it costs US\$30. The best value-for-money document reader that you can purchase is the ISiLO. This is available for US\$12.95 at <http://www.isilo.com>. There is a newer version of the programme Isilo 3.0 available, but the older version which uses the least amount of memory than any other document is still very useful.

Medical references such as Harrison's Principle of Internal Medicine, Griffith's 5 minute clinical consult, and the Merck Manual

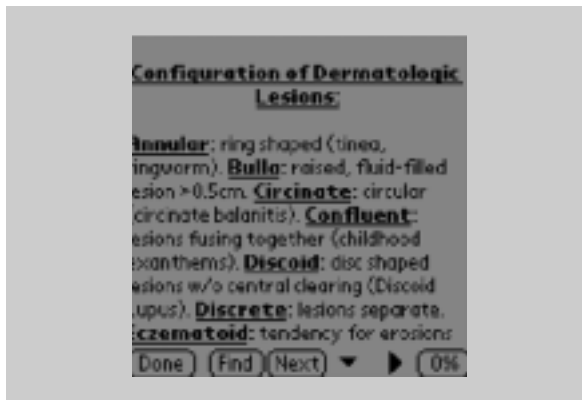


Figure 3: Textbook Of Dermatology

of diagnosis and therapy can be purchased at <http://www.handheldmed.com>.

The latest ATP III cholesterol guideline, obesity guideline and the BMI calculator can be downloaded from the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>.

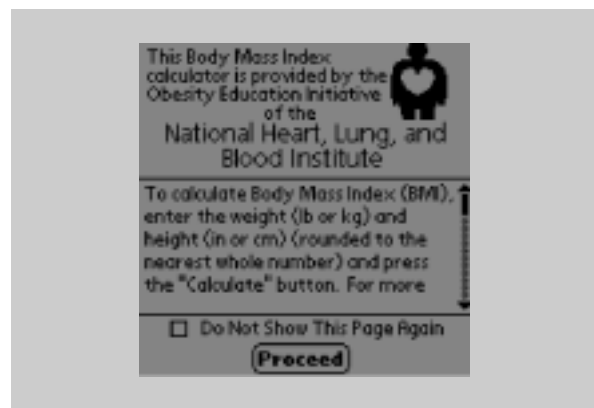


Figure 4: Body Mass Index Calculator

A little Medical program that calculates complicated formulas such as Creatinine Clearance, body mass index and coma scale that you cannot do without and should be downloaded into your PDA is the MEDCALC. This freeware is available at <http://www.calc.med.edu>. Many medical-related websites also provide links for you to download this application.

Journal To go allows oneself to keep current and updated. Abstracts from peer review journals can be downloaded and viewed at leisure. This is free at <http://www.journaltogo.com>.

For those of you who like to keep yourselves sane during long and boring meetings, you will find hundreds of games available to chase away the blues. Believe it or not, it is better than any gameboy money can buy. Best of all, a lot of them are free.

### DOWNLOADING APPLICATIONS

Downloading applications from the Internet is as simple as 123.

1. Install the "Hot Sync" program that come with the Handheld into your computer.
2. Go to the website of the application that you want and download it into your computer desktop.
3. Most of the applications come in a compressed format to allow quicker downloading. You will have to expand it before you can 'Hot Sync' to your PDA. You can download the Stuffit Expander from <http://www.stuffit.com>. This is one of the easiest expanders to use. All you have to do is to Drag and Drop the downloaded application to the Stuffit Icon and it will automatically be Unzipped.
4. Double-click on the expanded application and a pop-up will appear to tell you that the application will be downloaded into your PDA at the next "hot Sync".

These steps are necessary only if the applications come in a .zip format. Most applications are small enough to be downloaded in the .exe file. All you have to do is to double-click on the icon and it will automatically be opened in your computer, ready to be downloaded into your PDA at the next "Hot Sync".

### BEAM ME

The PDA can be a very useful tool and valuable resource for patient care. It has found itself into a lot of white coats' pockets. Best of all, data can be shared easily between compatible PDAs. Just beam it.

### INTERNET RESOURCES

1. Singapore Medical Association  
<http://www.sma.org.sg>
2. Singapore Palm User Group  
<http://www.spug.org.sg>
3. National Medical Library  
<http://www.medical-library.org>  
Many ebooks such as Outpatient Medicine and Family Medicine etc can be downloaded into the PDA
4. Handheld med  
<http://www.handheldmed.com>  
Reference textbooks such as Harrison's Principles Of Internal Medicine can be purchased at this site. It is also available in the form of Springboard module for attaching to your Handspring model.
5. Mobipocket  
<http://www.mobipocket.com>  
The software allows you to download and read newspapers such as the Financial Times on your PDA. Books can also be purchased or downloaded for free at this site. Many medical textbooks in the Palm format can also be purchased here. Working demos of these books can also be downloaded for free.
6. Fphandheld  
<http://www.fphandheld.com>
7. Emedicine  
<http://www.emedicine.com>  
The Disaster and Trauma medicine ebook can be downloaded for free but it requires registration.

This list is by all means not exhaustive, but it is a start. Many of these sites provide you with links to similar sites.