

TECH TALK

The last word on PDA's, and contest winner



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I started my column almost two years ago writing about PDA's. I recommended a used Palm IIIxe for those on a budget or those not sure if a PDA was worth the investment.

Yet people still ask me, "Which PDA to buy?" So, once again, here is my opinion.

If you use a Macintosh or Linux or run Windows but not Microsoft Outlook, you must buy a Palm Pilot.

If you run Windows and you use Outlook, you have a choice. If you want a PDA that will sync with Outlook and give you access to your Outlook Calendar, Contacts, and Email, and you can afford it, you might want to consider a Pocket PC. But, do you really need it?

Most people only carry their PDA when they work clinically. They want to be able to look up medicines, calculate things like gestational age and predicted peak flow, and double-check an ABG analysis. Why buy an overly complex Pocket PC with costly software when a simple Palm Pilot with free software will suffice?

Buy a Palm. Which one depends on your wallet. You only need the cheapest one with a minimum of 8 MB of memory,

and a used one will suffice. So after two years, I still recommend a used Palm IIIxe.

CONTEST ANSWER AND WINNER (FROM VOL 32, NO 2, APRIL/MAY 2005, P. 5)

The Magic Words are "Squeamish Ossifrage"

When the RSA encryption method was announced in Scientific American in 1977, an encoded message was published along with the public key. For \$100, the challenge was to decrypt the message. A worldwide team of 600 volunteers formed and finished decrypting the message in 1994. One of my headlines was the decrypted message, The Magic Words are "Squeamish Ossifrage." Rest assured, your online transactions are secure. Decrypting that single sentence took the 600 volunteers 17 years using mainframes and supercomputers. And current public keys are much larger.

ALICE, BOB, AND EVE

A paradigm of convenience (i.e. placeholders) used to discuss cryptography: Alice wants to send a message to Bob, and somehow Eve has access to the contents of the message ("Eve" is

EaVESdropping). Alice wants Bob to be able to decrypt the message, but not Eve.

The first correct response came from Kevin Innes, DO (2005). He will be starting his prelim year at St. Joseph's Hospital (Phoenix, AZ) and then move to his EM residency at Boston Medical Center (Boston, MA). Congratulations!!! Enjoy your bottle of red wine from the Finger Lakes.

Correct responses were also received from:

Mike Antonello, MD
Yi-Mei Chng, MD
Nick Genes, MD, PhD (2005)
Todd Howell, MD
Greg Murphy, MD
Rachel Steinhart, MD, MPH
R. Thomas VanHook, MD
Thomas L. Zickgraf, MS, DO

Some knew the answers, some turned to the Internet, and one resident asked their computer-science-major spouse! I even had one reply from a residency director, Lawrence E. Kass, MD, FACEP, FAAEM from Penn State Hershey Medical Center, Hershey, PA.

Thank you to all who read my column and to all who replied! ■

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