Background

- Interest and pressure from students and faculty for Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) resources in the library
- Administration reluctant to spend library funds purchasing resources in multiple formats; no specific funds were earmarked for PDA resources
- Library administration expressed a need to determine which products assisted students in decision making during their clinical years
- Library actively sought and received grant funding directed towards PDA use in medical education allowing Himmelfarb to develop a pilot project to evaluate PDA medical reference software

Pilot Project Objectives

- To compare PDA use among the following groups:
  - Third and Fourth year medical students
  - Second year Physician Assistant students
  - Residents
- To evaluate how groups used Griffith's 5 Minute Clinical Consult® by Skyscape® in the clinical setting
- To use the questionnaire data to plan further PDA initiatives
PDA Power at the Bedside:  
A Comparison of the Use of Griffith's 5 Minute Clinical Consult®  
by Medical and Physician Assistant Students and Residents  
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Methods

- PDA Committee established to review PDA medical reference software and to plan the pilot project
- Established selection criteria for PDA medical reference software:
  - Compatible with either Palm® or personal PC operating systems
  - Ease of use and readability
  - Depth and quality of information
  - Product cost and license agreements
  - Applicability to target audience
- Applied criteria to a variety of PDA medical reference software
- After review, Griffith's 5 Minute Clinical Consult® by Skyscape® was selected and 350 copies were purchased by Himmelfarb Library using the grant monies
- Some grant money was used to purchase PDAs and the software for librarians so that they would be familiar with the product and able to assist students
- An evaluation questionnaire was developed by the PDA Committee
- Distribution of Griffith's 5 Minute Clinical Consult®:
  - Students had to have their own PDA with an expansion card
  - Library registration was required; students provided their name, program affiliation and email address in order to receive the software
  - Students were given a product code and directions on downloading the software from the Skyscape® website
  - Students agreed to evaluate the software via a web-based questionnaire
  - Students had five to seven months to use and evaluate Griffith's 5 Minute Clinical Consult®
  - The link to the questionnaire was provided via email and feedback was received during a 2 week period in March, 2004
Results

• Of 720 potential registrants, 320 students or 44% picked up their free personal copy of Griffith's 5 Minute Clinical Consult® and used the product for at least five months
• In March 2004, the questionnaire was emailed to each person and we have received 74 questionnaire responses:
  – 42 medical students
  – 17 physician assistant students
  – 15 residents
• 41 registrants had other medical software on their PDAs:
  – 8 medical students chose basic resources like dictionaries and other basic resources
  – 12 physician assistants reported having drug resources and dictionaries
  – 11 residents chose drug guides and medical calculators
  – 10 respondents did not report having other medical software on their PDAs
• 77% of those responding reported using their PDAs “all the time” regardless of group affiliation:
  – 74% used their PDA for drug information
  – 16% used their PDA for medical calculation
  – 3% used their PDA for disease etiology or epidemiology information
  – 47% used their PDA for treatment information
• Overall, 28% used Griffith's 5 Minute Clinical Consult® on a regular basis, of these:
  – 64% found background information on a specific condition
  – 58% enhanced their own knowledge
  – 85% felt that the software improved their work in clinical or patient situations
• 97% of all users would recommend Griffith's 5 Minute Clinical Consult® to others

Conclusions

• Data suggests that those already familiar with PDAs relied more heavily on them for clinical information
• Medical and physician assistant students with limited clinical experience reported using Griffith's 5 Minute Clinical Consult® as a primary source; whereas, residents with greater clinical knowledge relied more heavily on other medical reference software
• It is difficult to coax responses from students unless there is a “reward” for completing a questionnaire
• Usage data suggests that Griffith's 5 Minute Clinical Consult® is a good choice as a basic clinical information tool for students
• When funds become available PDA software should be seriously considered for regular purchase for this user group