

How Computers Can Help the Family Physician

Flowsheets/templates: both preset (already present in the EMR) and made by FP her/himself. These are very helpful for recurring problems or chronic conditions, also for some evidence-based medicine tools. Examples include:

- chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, asthma, depression, hypertension)
- Rourke Baby Record or Preventive health table. The template is loaded; then, with one click, the whole document is placed in the patient record. Most of the interventions are checked off already, saving time.
- common conditions: back pain template with easy access to a list of symptoms and red flags, as well as pre-made illustration of the back that you can draw on; sore throat score (check box for symptoms), with suggestions of what to do for each score; etc.
- lab tests and vitals (weight, BMI, BP, waist circumference, peak flows)
- anticoagulation flow sheets: eliminate the need for duplication and are especially helpful for international normalized ratios.



Pre-programmed lab requisitions (done by individual FP)

examples: (1) full checkup for diabetic, with all recommended tests pre-filled; can add extra tests if needed (for example, a TSH if on synthroid); (2) first prenatal; (3) annual checkup age 40 and over; (4) annual checkup for HT

Pre-made lists of recommendations for plan (done by individual FP)

example: recommendations for gastroenteritis (oral rehydration therapy, watch for dehydration, refeed small amounts often, danger signs, etc.). You can have a drop-down list of common things, click on the relevant one, and the whole thing is placed into the plan. Saves time, very complete documentation. You don't have to do it all at once; when making a good management plan during an encounter, you can save it in your "Favourites" list.

More Advantages:

- Automatic and immediate generation of data, such as BMI, percentile BMI for age 18 and under, percentiles for height/weight/head circumference for babies (and automatic generation of growth charts).
- Easy searches for lab results (enter what you are looking for, and it looks for every single instance of it).
- Automatic interactions and allergy checking for drugs. Easy renewals. List of favourite drugs you build as you prescribe, so the next time the drug can be prescribed with only a few keystrokes (sepra DS, zithromax, beconase, etc.).
- Tracking and recording of all messages in office/phone calls (no more little pieces of paper).
- Ability to generate follow-up reminders, both ongoing and one-time only.
- Tracking: referrals—helpful in case of cancellation; blood tests (much more efficient than in a paper-based system); diagnostic imaging tests.
- Record of websites accessed for handouts during encounter.
- Automatic generation of lists of patients due for preventive services; printing of personalized letters; computerized reminders at the point of care.
- Alerts for staff: automatic alert if there was a problem with the health card, and if there is a specific task you wish to assign to staff (example, give postmenopausal woman a questionnaire to fill out in waiting room before they see physician). The alert is put in when the clinical encounter is finished, so it pops up next time the patient comes.
- Ability to quickly generate lists of patients with particular conditions.
- Ability to access your charts from anywhere at any time; especially useful for physicians in part-time practice, who need to access blood test results. It's good to go home in the evening without carrying a lot of charts home!

