Barriers to Computer use
An e-article for clinicians
By
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Today I am going into some of the resistances to using the computer that are frequent among clinicians. I am doing so because it helps to know as much as you can about what is stopping you from going forward into something that might turn out to be a crucial part of your practice efficiency.

Technical Stuff
Computers do require that you learn how to use them. You can be exhaustive about it or just learn what you need to learn to do what you want to do. There is far more detail in a modern computer than all but the most avid technophile would want. Luckily you don't have to learn most of it. I favor the latter method. Software has gotten so incredibly complex that it is overkill to learn everything about how to use a software program. Each new mammoth office program has more and more functionality and less and less efficiency because the commands needed to run it fully are so involved no one in their right mind would learn them all. You don't need to create a publishing empire. You just need to get your record keeping done in a timely manner.

With a basic manual of how to do things, however, clinicians can do a very creditable job of typing what they need to, getting around in a program, and accomplishing their work. Specific directions files do help here and they can mean the difference between success and failure.

There is lots of technical material written about computers. To be sure, there is a lot underneath the surface that is very complicated

and involved. You don't have to have a degree in physics however to use an automobile and it is the same for computers.

Inertia

We all have a love of the familiar. The familiar is predictable, known, and therefore less anxiety provoking. To change can sometimes be disorienting so we stick with the familiar. So much is asked of clinicians these days that we don't want to increase the burden even if it might benefit us to do so. It takes some real skill to balance a personal life and that of a therapist. One or other of them alternately clamors for more energy and time. If you change something all the time you get disoriented so sticking with the predictable can really help to keep us on the straight and narrow.

On the other hand nothing ventured, nothing gained. Didn't you learn how to use a push button phone? The copier? The fax machine? The VHS recorder? Tape machines? Voice Mail? Transcription sites? E-mail? I'll bet even a few of you have ITunes on your computer or an IPod. If you thought that a modest effort to learn something new might really benefit you, would you look into it?

I can't answer for you but I assume a large proportion of you would investigate a bit to see if you could benefit from something new.

Suffice it to say the goal of software programs is to make your record keeping much more efficient, thereby taking less time and energy to keep records.

Lack of knowledge
You may not know what a good computer program can do for you. So many of the offerings in today's market are designed for large groups or corporations. The single user is faced with large, complicated programs that aren't very user friendly. Naturally this would cause you to be reluctant to tackle a new one. Unless you are technically oriented you don't consider it fun to peruse the Internet for programs that can do what you want and need. You may not even know what you want or need. That is where someone else can show you how it could work and then you can see if that makes sense to you.

Finally you may not have thought of yourself as a typist. Have you ever typed every day for an hour? Unless you have had exposure to regular typing you may not realize how practiced you would be if you typed daily. Your skill would improve, and your error rate would go down. True, it would take a bit of time, but what a great skill to

develop. We all have to either dictate or type letters, reports, and communications of one sort or another. Increasing your typing skill could really help you in your work. If someone offered you 40% greater gas mileage on your automobile would you grab it quickly? Of course you would! Using typing and a good computer program can increase your record efficiency by 40% easily. All you have to do is learn it and the 40% is yours forever!

So give some thought to using a computer for records. It is a natural for the kind of work we do as clinicians. It suits what we need to accomplish and makes us much more efficient. Then we can get back to the things that mean more to us.

Best regards,

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