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Abbreviation Utilities

An e-article for clinicians by
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Many clinicians type various documents. It may be an occasional letter, a report or full fledged clinical records. It is a truism in the keyboard world that the more you type the better you get. Kind of like tennis or golf.

As an aside, I am amazed that most of today's teenagers type rather well. I believe some of it has to do with the fact that computer games often require them to type and in short order because they are highly motivated to play the game they learn to type quickly.

Keyboards have gotten to be much improved over time. I have had the pleasure of using 10 or twenty keyboards on desktops and various laptops over the years and I am impressed with how nicely they function. Computer screens are very much clearer than they used to be and the graphic software used to make the images on screens has also come a long way.

I would like to suggest that for optimal efficiency that anyone doing much typing considers the use of an abbreviation utility. You may not be familiar with them so let me explain. For a modest cost (\$15-25) you can buy a software program for your computer in which you can create a custom dictionary of words and phrases that you use frequently associated with a few key commands. Then when you are typing in a text field, whether an e-mail or a letter, report or a clinical record you can type the key sequence and have the phrase enter the text. Text expanders (or abbreviation utilities as some people call them) are really helpful for your speed and the efficiency with which you get things done. It might not seem worth it to you to go to the trouble of learning something like that but hear me out.

Let's look at the kinds of things you repetitively type and see if there are enough to warrant the effort. Let's see.

Best regards, Sincerely, Sincerely Yours, your signature, your address, your phone number, and then technical things like Informed consent given after discussion of side effects, risks, and potential benefits, or No

suicidal/homicidal ideation plan or intent noted upon questioning. How about “Please feel to contact me should you feel the need”. The client contracts for safety. Client compliant with medication. To call next week. Recent PE. Recent labs. Other practitioner contacted. Phone call.

There really are quite a few things that we repetitively type that could go in that custom dictionary. In fact I venture that there are a lot more phrases you use regularly than you might realize at first glance. Looking through one of your charts if you are typical you will find a lot of phrases repeated.

For the psychiatrist there are frequent uses of abbreviations such as **Rxgiven, Rxcalled, Rxmailed, Medication change**, etc. Medications can be abbreviated so you don't have to type out Abilify or Fluvoxamine every time. “Patient compliant with medication” comes up quite a bit. The utilities can capitalize, bold, or underline whatever you put in there.

If you don't type much it probably isn't worth it. On the other hand if you type a fair amount or are keeping records in a computer daily and using this most efficient way of getting the written word down at a rapid rate, an abbreviation utility begins to make a lot more sense. Those of us that type a lot find them indispensable.

For the PC- take a look at www.shortkeys.com \$19.95

For the Mac take a look at **Typinator** at www.ergonis.com \$19.95 EUR

Or Typeit4me at www.typeit4me.com \$27.00 USD

Websites: www.clinicalrecordkeeper.com Software for the PC

www.clinicalrecordkeeper-mac.com Software for the Mac OS

www.emailforclinicians.com Secure E-mail

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