

Medical software for smartphones

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Several physicians who use smartphones, such as the Apple iPhone, have recently asked me where they can find useful medical software. This article discusses some of the best sources for medical software applications and some issues involved in downloading and using them.

SMARTPHONES

A smartphone is a cellphone that can also be used as a hand-held computer. Smartphones are available from many different manufacturers, with the models from Apple and BlackBerry being among the most popular.

OPERATING SYSTEM

The operating system (OS) is the master software program that controls all other functions. When purchasing medical software, be sure that the program is available for the OS used by your device. Major medical applications are usually available for more than one OS.

APPLICATIONS

Applications (“apps”) are software programs that can be downloaded and used on the smartphone. For physicians, the 2 most popular types of application are a general medical reference, such as The 5-Minute Clinical Consult, and a drug reference, such as Lexi-Drugs.

DOWNLOADING

Depending on the device and software vendor, applications may be downloaded by directly connecting the

smartphone to your desktop computer, by using a wireless network or by a cellular connection. Cellular connections are potentially more unstable than a wireless connection and may be subject to network connection charges.

HARDWARE MANUFACTURERS

Cellphone manufacturers usually provide information about where users of their product can download applications for their products, such as the iTunes Store for the Apple iPhone. If you use the search term “medical” on these websites, you will discover that most applications are designed for patients. Try limiting your search to a medical specialty or to the name of a software vendor (see Medical software vendors).

MEDICAL SOFTWARE VENDORS

To save time and effort, visit the websites of the major medical software vendors to see what they offer. Some popular applications, such as The 5-Minute Clinical Consult, are available from more than one vendor. Some vendors offer cost-saving packages that contain more than one application.

SKYSCAPE

Skyscape (www.skyscape.com) has more than 600 medical applications available for health care professionals. To narrow your search, click on the “Physicians” link and then select your specialty. Next, click the “View all” link to see all relevant products. The list is initially sorted by popularity, but you

can also sort it by name, price or release date. Free trials are available for some products. A package of completely free applications is available by clicking the “Free app” link on the home page.

UNBOUND MEDICINE

Unbound Medicine (www.unboundmedicine.com) has a large number of medical applications, some of which are the same as those available from Skyscape. The site allows you to limit a search by profession and product type. Free trials are available for some products.

USBMIS

USBMIS (www.usbmis.com) has a variety of medical applications, including the drug database Tarascon Pharmacopoeia, which has some Canadian content. Click on “Products” in the top menu to view a list of applications that can be sorted by device or topic. Click on “All products” to limit a search by profession or device.

LEXICOMP

LexiComp (www.lexi.com) provides a number of comprehensive drug-related applications, plus a limited selection of other clinical applications, including The 5-Minute Clinical Consult. Its Lexi-Drugs application has good Canadian content. You can download an application that gives you a 30-day free trial of all their products.

PEPID

Pepid (www.pepid.com) provides packages of applications for family and emergency physicians. A 14-day free trial is available.

TARASCON

Tarascon (www.tarascon.com) provides the Tarascon Pharmacopoeia plus a limited selection of other medical applications.

EPOCRATES

The main Epocrates product is a drug database that is available in a free and a more extensive subscription edition (www.epocrates.com). It has a few other medical applications; its Canadian content was limited when last tested.

MEDSCAPE

The free Medscape Mobile application provides a drug database, a drug interaction checker, a disease reference, clinical procedures and specialty-focused medical news (www.medscape.com).

ITUNES — MEDICAL APPS

Access a list of the medical applications available on the iTunes website at itunes.apple.com/us/genre/ios-medical/id6020?mt=8.

IMEDICAL APPS

Find articles about medical applications for smartphones and tablet computers at www.imedicalapps.com.

IPHONE MEDICAL INFO

Find articles about medical applications for the iPhone, iPod touch and iPad at www.iphonemedicalinfo.com.

ANDROID MEDICAL APPS

Access articles about medical applications for Android OS devices at androidmedicalapps.com.

BLACKBERRY APP WORLD

Applications for Blackberry devices, most of which are for patients, can be found at <http://appworld.blackberry.com/webstore/>.

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