

The death of ink: the value of typing skills as an addition to the medical school curriculum

Saiful Miah¹
Hashim U Ahmed²

¹Department of Urology, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, Charing Cross Hospital, ²Imperial College London, London, UK

Dear editor

We read with great interest the article by Malik on the importance of writing skills, which has been highlighted as one of the four competencies that all medical students should possess as future doctors.¹ Malik's article also stated that "first and foremost" writing in a legible manner is imperative for good clinical practice.¹

While we wholeheartedly agree with these statements, one potentially overlooked skill that we predict will overtake the requirement of legible writing skills within a generation of doctors is typing proficiency. Decades of investment and development of electronic health records (EHRs) have resulted in a greater implementation of this tool globally.² EHRs have been shown through use of reminders, electronic order sets and other means to improve reliability of performance of many basic tasks in acute, preventive and chronic medical care.²

Optimal utilization of EHRs requires sound typing skills. There is evidence that the majority of newly qualified doctors lack this skill, which could potentially impact on their time for learning as well as patient care.³ We are in agreement with Malik that a greater emphasis is required for medical students to develop their writing skills in the undergraduate curriculum. We would also propose formal typing skills and increased familiarity with EHR systems to be introduced in the medical curricula. This would be in-keeping with the evolution of contemporary medical practice, which is resulting in the slow "death of ink" as medium of communication and documentation.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

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Correspondence: Saiful Miah
Department of Urology, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham Palace Road, London, W6 8RF, UK
Email saiful.miah@ucl.ac.uk

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