

# The MedPeds News

The Official Newsletter of the National MedPeds Residents' Association

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## President's Column

*By David C Kaelber, MD, PhD, NMPRA President*

As the year is well underway now and we are all in the midst of recruiting residents for next year, I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on NMPRA activities and look for your feedback and assistance.

I appreciated seeing some of you in Boston at our National meeting. If you were not able to attend, please mark your calendars now for the weekend of November 1-2, 2003 when our National meeting will be in New Orleans, again in conjunction with the American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference and Exhibition. If you would like to review the overview of NMPRA presented at the National meeting, the PowerPoint presentation is online at <http://www.medpeds.org/PowerPoint/NMPRA2002.htm>.

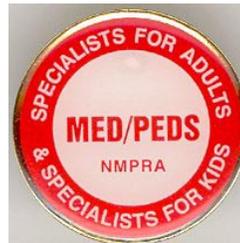
As some of you have seen, we have circulated a draft of the new MedPeds Fellowship Guide. The draft Guide is located at <http://www.medpeds.org/PDF/FellowshipGuide.pdf>. Any comments, suggestions, or information for the Guide can be emailed to [fellowships@medpeds.org](mailto:fellowships@medpeds.org). Also, especially for PGY4 residents we are continuing to enhance our MedPeds Job web page, located at <http://www.medpeds.org/jobs.htm>, which now contains almost 70 MedPeds jobs.

We are always looking for additional residents to help out with NMPRA activities. The time commitment is generally only a couple of hours per month, as your schedule allows. If you are interested in finding out more about helping NMPRA, please email me at [president@medpeds.org](mailto:president@medpeds.org).

Finally, if you and other members of your residency program are not currently NMPRA members, please take this opportunity to encourage your Program Director support your membership in NMPRA. Details about joining NMPRA can be found at <http://www.medpeds.org/register.htm>. A list of Programs whose residents are members of NMPRA can be found at [http://www.medpeds.org/founding\\_programs.htm](http://www.medpeds.org/founding_programs.htm).

We are always looking for suggestions on how we can improve NMPRA to better meet your needs. Please feel free to email me with any comments, questions, or ideas that you have at [president@medpeds.org](mailto:president@medpeds.org).

### NMPRA Pin On-line



A.



B.

**Pin A: \$5 and Pin B: \$4**

Pin order forms available on-line at <http://www.medpeds.org/pins.htm>.

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## Handheld computers...an integral part of medicine

By Brian Zimmerman, MD

*(This is the first in two-part series about PDAs. This article focuses on PDA hardware - the machine. The next article will focus on PDA software. Dr. Zimmerman was the 2001-2002 Gary Onady Award Winner.)*

It is truly amazing to watch the evolution of the handheld computer or personal digital assistant (PDA). In the last three to four years PDAs have gone from being an obscure device that was mostly used by "nerds" to a nearly essential device used by the vast majority of medical professionals.

Many of you already own PDAs but may someday want to upgrade to a newer device. So...discussing a few questions may be helpful. What features are important in selecting a device? What software can make your life easier? What does the future hold for these devices?

### NMPRA ELECTIONS

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May 2003

*(more information in the next MedPeds News)*

Selecting a device: The first question to ask is which operating system to choose. There are two main operating systems (OS) available: Palm and Windows. Initially these were quite different but are becoming more similar. They still have some distinct differences. Both are easy to use. Both can run most of the textbook software available. The Palm OS allows you to beam applications to other Palm OS computers. The Windows OS requires you to load the application from your personal computer. The Windows OS allows you to run several applications at the same time but the Palm OS does not. If you survey your colleagues, you will probably find that the Palm OS is more common. However, the Windows OS devices are becoming more popular. There are some pretty strong

opinions as to which OS is better, but take time to look at with each one and make an educated decision as to which one would be better for you. The next question to ask is what features you want or need. There are many options in this area and you should really spend some time to see what is available and consider your needs. Some of the variables to consider are:

**Memory:** The storage capacity or memory of the device is very important. Many of the textbooks and software programs require a lot of memory to be stored on the device. The amount of built-in memory is important. Most come with at least 16 megabytes of built-in memory. Most of the devices come with an expansion slot that allows you to add memory to the device. With all the software available and the increasing size of the programs, this expandability is very important.

**Screen Size and Resolution:** Some of the devices have a larger screen size or higher screen resolution than others. Larger screen size allows more information to be on the screen at the same time and makes for less scrolling when trying to read text on the screen. Higher resolution means greater image detail on the screen. This can be important if you want to store and view images on your PDA.

**Camera:** Some devices come with a built-in camera or allow for a plug-in camera for taking still images. This can come in handy if you come across an interesting rash or lesion and want to capture an image of it for later review or to send to a consultant.

**Voice Capability:** Many of the devices have a built-in microphone for recording digital messages or dictations.

**Music/Video:** Many newer devices will allow you to play music files (like MP3s) or video on the device. This can be nice to have for a little relaxation or for educational purposes.

**Phone:** Some of the newer devices have a built-in cellular phone. This combination device can be pretty nice as it not only works as a cellular phone but also allows you to connect to the internet over the cell phone line and surf the web or search online databases such as PubMed from anywhere the phone can connect.

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The decision to purchase or upgrade a PDA requires a little preparation, as there are many options to consider. But with a little research and hands on experience, you'll be sure to find a device that suits your needs!

*(You may direct any questions that you may have on board preparation to Dr. Brian Zimmerman at [brian.zimmerman@wright.edu](mailto:brian.zimmerman@wright.edu))*

## "Where's my #2 pencil? A guide to Board Preparation"

*By Tommy Cross, MD, MPH*

*(This is the second in a two-part series on Board preparation. Dr. Cross is the NMPRA Non-Resident Advisor. He is a former MedPeds Program Director and currently the Vice-President for Education at MedStudy Corporation. The first part of this series appeared in the Fall 2002 MedPeds News and is on-line at <http://www.medpeds.org/news.htm>.)*

## 6. What about professional study courses/guides?

For the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) there are lots of products available to help you study:

MKSAP (<http://www.acponline.org>), Mayo Review (you can find at most book stores or <http://www.amazon.com>), Cleveland Clinic Review (bookstores or <http://www.amazon.com>), and MedStudy (<http://www.medstudy.com>), to name a few. It is best for you to review as many of these as possible and then decide which fits your study needs best. Many people still like to study by reading Cecil's or Harrison's or another textbook. My one completely unbiased recommendation on these is: Stick with 1 study aid for the majority of your studying!—You are more likely to remember something if you go through one study aid 3 times than if you go through 3 different study aids 1 time! Also, determine how do you learn. Are you an aural learner, a visual learner, or a mechanical learner?

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## Is the Volume of Medical Information ~~YOUR~~ Residents Need to Learn Knocking Them off Track?



Save up to 25% off trusted handheld medical references by enrolling your Institution in Skyscape's smarTrain program. Give your residents and students the power of a medical library on their PDAs by visiting us at [www.skyscape.com/smartrain](http://www.skyscape.com/smartrain) and use CODE SM81822 or contact us at [smartrain@skyscape.com](mailto:smartrain@skyscape.com).



**Aural learners:** On rounds do you usually remember what the Attending says or do you remember information presented at Grand Rounds or conferences just by hearing it? If you read something do you NOT remember it—but if you read it OUT LOUD do you remember it?

**Visual learners:** On rounds do you find your eyes glazing over and not hearing anything? Or do you try and pay attention but after rounds can't remember a thing the attending said? Do you go to Grand Rounds or conferences and find yourself reading the handout and learning more that way? If you read something in a book or journal--say for journal club do you learn it better than way or by listening to the explanation at journal club?

**Mechanical learners:** Do you go to Grand Rounds or conferences and listen and read the slides but still not get it? What happens if you write it down in your own words or take notes during the lecture—can you remember things better then? If so then you are likely a mechanical learner—taking notes from study materials or texts will be helpful for you. Then you study your own notes in your own handwriting—it seems to make things "stick" better.

Most of us are a mix of the above; so don't be surprised if you can't pigeonhole yourself into any one category.

If you are an aural learner—you may have to read out loud to yourself or tape yourself. Or you can get ACP or MedStudy or Mayo videotapes and watch them and "listen" to the speakers.

For the visual learners videos can also be helpful as you follow along in the texts that they provide with the tapes.

Or, do you remember things better if you read them? MKSAP was really all that was around when I was taking my Boards for the first time. It really hasn't changed—it is very up-to-date and rich of information—just about every word is important. It works well for some people, for others—it is too in-depth and misses the "Board" points or does not point them out very well. The other Board review products are just that--they are set up mainly to help people study for the Boards. If you are one of these types then there are lots of options available for

you. Besides MKSAP, the two most popular are MedStudy and Mayo Reviews. However some prefer to read Cecil or Harrison's and study from that source—so figure out what works best for you!

For the mechanical learner—you pretty much can use any source you want—just be sure that you can write it down and review it well. Usually an already succinct review text will be more helpful.

## 7. How do you know what to concentrate on?

Well for the ABIM it is easier in my opinion. On their website, <http://www.abim.org>, they publish the exact breakdown of the exam as far as the different areas of concentration. For example, cardiology makes up 14% of the exam while adolescent medicine makes up 2%. This should help you figure out what to study.

For the ABP it is a crapshoot. They have guidelines of what they cover but they won't publish it! Most people use the "content feedback statements" from the Peds In-training examination. Your program director should give you a copy of this after you get your Peds in-service examination—it lists the type of question asked on that particular in-service. I recommend you save these for all 4 years so you can review them at the time of you study to be sure that you know most of the items listed.

***NMPRA Job Resources***

Still trying to find a job. NMPRA has significantly upgraded the MedPeds Job Opportunities website with almost 70 open MedPeds positions located at <http://www.medpeds.org/jobs.htm>. Also check out the 23-page MedPeds Job Search Guide located at [http://www.medpeds.org/jobs\\_guide.htm](http://www.medpeds.org/jobs_guide.htm).

## 8. What do people use to study PEDS?

Well, there are a lot less options for Peds study aids. The book "Laughing your way to the boards" many residents consider helpful—information is available at

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<http://www.passboards.com/pediatrics/ourbooks.html>. They also have a 320 question and answer book available. MedStudy also offers a 550 Question and Answer CD. Most people use PREP questions and study Zitelli or other picture books to look at "funny looking kids". Again there is a LOT of overlap between what you have studied for the ABIM and the ABP. Endocrine for example—is very similar. The key here is after you have finished studying for the ABIM intensify your study of topics not covered on the ABIM—genetics, syndromes, metabolic nightmares, growth and development, etc...and topics specific to pediatrics like pyloric stenosis or chemotherapy for a 3 year-old with ALL.

### NMPRA Awards 2003-2004

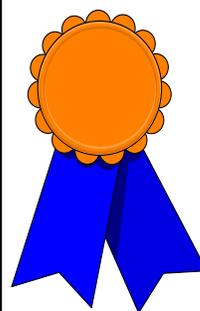
- \$500 Educational Grant
- \$500 Travel Grant to attend the 2003 NMPRA National Meeting and AAP National Conference and Exhibition
- Must be NMPRA members
- One award for local MedPeds contributions
- One award for national MedPeds contributions
- Recipients must be able to attend the NMPRA National Meeting on November 1-2, 2003, in New Orleans
- Application information in the next *MedPeds News*

## 9. What about Board Review Courses?

I think they are ideal for those who have a limited time to study and can aid all types of learners whether they learn "aurally, visually, or mechanically". Usually the handouts from review course are very helpful! These handouts summarize knowledge succinctly and provide high-yield areas to focus on. The American College of Physicians (ACP) conducts courses specifically geared towards board review, as well as some local medical schools and organizations like MedStudy, Mayo Review, etc. The AAP also puts on courses but are more geared to "being up-to-date." Watch out for programs that are billed as "get the latest knowledge and newest research information"...that is great if you are in

practice or want this, but you just want information to pass the boards right? Remember the Boards frequently are based on information that may be as old as 5-10 or more years! Generally the most recent information on the Boards is at least 2 years old or older. New information generally has to go through a lot of hoops to appear on the boards to be sure that it is non-controversial or substantiated by most "experts" in the field—this takes time---for questions to be written and to be sure that the answers are considered "correct" by a majority of "experts".

### NMPRA 2002 Award Recipient



David Kaelber, MD, PhD was presented with the 2002 Gary Onady Award. This award was sponsored by a generous grant from Astra Zeneca Pharmaceuticals.

More details about Dr. Kaelber and the NMPRA Awards can be found at <http://www.medpeds.org/gary.htm>.

## 10. How to pay for boards?

If you can, negotiate in your contract with your new bosses for them to pay for both of your boards as well as transportation, housing, and meals. If you are really good get them to provide funds towards review books and a Review course as well! For those of you going on to fellowship—see if you can use some of your "Education" fund (either your current residency or your future fellowship program) towards the Boards or getting reimbursed for some of the expenses—it can't hurt to ask. Some fellowship programs have "slush" funds sitting around to help you pay for Board related expenses. Finally, you may be able to deduct un-reimbursed Board related expense if the expenses exceed 2% of your income. Also, you can use VISA, MC, etc. to charge them.

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## 11. When to start studying?

Ah--the correct answer of course is your entire residency. But, if you are the professional procrastinator you really need to get your act together by January of your 4<sup>th</sup> year. By June you should be spending at least 2-3 hours a day studying! My approach was to come home, eat dinner with the family, play with the kids for a short time, then lock myself in the bedroom for 2-3 hours a night without interruption--unless I was post-call--then sleep really was required! I have a wonderful spouse who was able to pick up the extra workload around the house and be a "single" parent for those months from June through September. I'm convinced with my poor memory skills that it is the only way that I passed! On Saturday's after rounding at the hospital I would remain and study at the library till 5pm or so. Then I would blow off studying Saturday night and have some fun. During the day on Sunday I would take off completely from studying so I could enjoy the family and still have some sanity. I "gave" myself this break from Saturday night till Sunday night--I promised myself also that I could not feel guilty for taking time away from studying and it also meant that I had to do meaningful things with my family--not just take a nap! Sunday night I would take all of the "child care responsibilities" to give my wife a break and then I would get back to the 2-3 hours of studying after I got the kids to bed. It was a wild time--almost as bad as internship really as far as our time together. However, she knew it was important and that it was something we had to "get through" together. That was my warped way of doing it. I am sure you can come up with ways to make it work best for you and your family.

One additional item - in doing courses with MedStudy for the last 6 years I have learned that Study groups are a valuable asset. I would consider one, if you can find some people who would like to get together and study. In the study groups, mainly spend your time going over questions. It helps both the "slow" learner to

hear different perspectives and different ways of approaching a question and it helps the 'fast' learner learn even better while they teach. Usually you learn things best if you personally teach them to someone else. Try it if you can!

I hope this is helpful! Good luck and feel free to contact me if you have any questions about preparing for the Boards.

(You may direct any questions that you may have on board preparation to Dr. Tommy Cross at [tcross@medstudy.com](mailto:tcross@medstudy.com))

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**(The views expressed in this  
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