



Thursday Memo – May 15, 2014

I am always amazed at the extensions of the Thursday Morning Memo. During the past year, Linda Clark, now Linda Garufi left Family Health Center of Worcester to take on being an Associate Faculty at the Lehigh Valley Family Medicine Residency Program in Allentown, PA. She has not forgotten us!

Her reflection has incredible imagery that tells the tale of a family doctor's daily challenges through the benefits and challenges of a tablet PC with a long cord trailing behind her as she sees patients.

You can respond to Linda at Linda_G.Clark@lvhn.org or to the listserv in general. Enjoy!

Power Cord Grounding

I have the pleasure of working at a young FQHC in an urban setting with many patients being primarily Spanish speaking, originally from a variety of places within the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Our ten or so part-time medical providers share the 5 or so portable electronic tablets for patient care as all our work is based with in an electronic record. The collective, we, are all responsible to turn off and plug in when done, so that the tablet will gain charge and be available for the next user. As is to be expected, there are times that a tablet is not placed into its charger and this leaves the next provider with an uncharged tablet. To use an uncharged tablet, one has to bring along the power cord and plug it in to the wall socket in the patient care room.

Today I find myself in the situation of the provider with an uncharged tablet. As I move in and out of patient care rooms my tablet's long tail of an electrical cord marks my path behind me. I am time challenged and perennially running late during patient care sessions. Now I have this leash to remind me of my hurry and my frustration with the limited technology support services available within my medical home.

The cord becomes part of my hello and good-byes. I greet patients with a monologue that my tablet got up late and did not eat breakfast and so I must bring its plug into the room or we will be without its company and hence without its resources. A 4 year old girl has recovered from her coxsackie virus and needs a note to return to school. We talk about how my tablet needs "juice" and how she and I are healthier with drinking water.

Next, the plug gets wound around the stool on which I sit while having a conversation as to what to expect from labor and birth with an 18 year old in her first pregnancy, due next week. Her Aunt, with whom she lives and who accompanies her today, is wisely commenting on the natural process of birth while also unwinding the electric cord and placing it in a safe arrangement

behind me. Her Aunt will be a reliable and a grounded resource for this new Mom and newborn and today I am appreciative of her care of me as well.

I am speaking with an English literate 44 year old woman with chronic pain who has limited financial resources. As I introduce the idea of accessing options through joining a local time bank, she is reviewing the time bank's website through the internet connection on my tablet. I am thankful to have the ability to access the internet in this moment and the electric cord is light as a feather. I am content. I just may use the cord as a jump rope to skip on to my next venture.

Technology has it's challenges, can add to obstacles and it too needs to be nourished so that it can meet its potential. I am grateful when technology supports that which I value in family medicine: making connections with others, encouraging healthy choices, harnessing people's strengths, finding access to services, and even providing humor for healing.