
No arguing with digital display

Our practice manager recently attended a seminar on the use of computers in the surgery. I showed little interest at first because I misread the title as 'Commuters in the surgery', a sensitive issue as I had just covered the 40-mile journey from Chelmsford.

However, once I finally settled down to read his report, my imagination was fired.

It seems that for a few thousand pounds, one may be the proud owner of a compact and adaptable system for increasing the efficiency of one's practice. Storage. That should be no problem. The modern computer is no larger than a small desk. It would fit quite unobtrusively on top of the central heating boiler. Alternatively it could go in the broom cupboard, while the patients' notes went on top of the central heating boiler.

The pundits assured our practice manager the girls at the desk would get the hang of it. But what happens when the temp comes in during a flu epidemic? Imagine the consultation rate if the machine sent

recall letter to all elderly patients over six, or recommended repeat cervical smears on a few thousand males.

When it comes down to it, I suppose the computer's main use is to attract trainees and prospective partners. Once the novelty had worn off, it would be mainly used in working out car expenses and printing out copies of 'Barnacle Bill the Sailor' to impress colleagues.

For my part, I'd get one to replace the receptionist. After all, if a keyboard with digital display tells you you can't have an appointment for a week, it's very difficult to argue.

Dr Jon Garvey