

Tips for managing Tablet devices in clinical practice

This document outlines some strategies for effective management of tablet devices in a clinical setting.

Overall management of the devices

It is advisable in a department/service with multiple Tablet devices that a staff member is designated to manage the devices. The staff member is advised to check the devices weekly to ensure they are operating effectively. This staff member may also act as a 'go to' person when technical issues arise, and may facilitate liaison with the organisation's IT department.

Tracking and monitoring

For departments/services who have multiple devices, it is useful to label the devices with a number so this device can be tracked. Labelling will also assist in the set-up of email or iTunes accounts associated with this iPad. For eg. iPad 1 may have an iTunes account name of iPad1@hospitalx.org.au and a corresponding generic password.

A log book is a valuable tool to track the use of the Tablet device, particularly when the device is used by multiple staff members or students. This can be an electronic-based recording system or a hard copy recording system stored alongside the device. The logbook should record the device number and the time it was taken and returned.

Charging

In order to preserve battery life, staff are encouraged to completely switch off the device after each use. If the battery is below 50% charge, staff are advised to charge the device. This will ensure that the iPad is sufficiently charged for each staff member, student or session. Charging devices are ideally located adjacent to where the iPads are stored.

Protecting the device

A protective cover is recommended for any Tablet device, particularly in a clinical environment. There are a number of covers available on the market. Desirable features include: ensuring the Tablet device is enclosed, water proof, able to be wiped or cleaned and offers protection to the screen. Screen protectors should be applied to the device as soon as it is taken out of its original box. Applying the screen cover immediately will prevent the device from acquiring dust/smudges and enables the screen cover to be applied more easily. Devices should be stored in a cool environment, out of direct sunlight and preferably stored in a secure drawer or filing cabinet. Refer to output no. 5c(iii) "Hardware to Support use of iPads" for further information regarding covers and screen protection.

Infection control

There are no specific guidelines on infection control. You are advised to check with your organisation's Infection Control department/representative prior to commencing the use of a Tablet device. Staff and students are advised to use protective covers where able as these can be wiped over with alcohol based wipes. Should the Tablet device be contaminated directly with bodily fluid, the device will need to be treated with an appropriate infection control procedure in the same way that your organisation manages issues with mobile phones, pagers or other such equipment. In case of such an event, you may want to contact your organisation's Infection Control department and seek their advice.

Staff and students are encouraged to use an alcohol based hand rub solution prior to using the Tablet and in-between touching a patient and touching the device. It is also recommended that you encourage patients to use an alcohol based hand solution prior to using a Tablet device within a clinical setting.

Security

Your organisation may want to install appropriate security software on your Tablet device. This software is able to track the location of the device as well as override password requirements. The security software used within Alfred Health, and employed for this pilot project, is 'Airwatch'. This application has been loaded on to each iPad and requires each iPad to have a six digit password that is changed every 60 days. The device will wipe all data at any time if this password is entered incorrectly three times. Should the device be left in the community, IT staff can track the location of the device and remove all data if required. It is important for staff and students to be aware of the current six digit password to ensure the device does not shut down unnecessarily. We would advise that you develop a process to notify staff of passwords without breaching security.

iTunes and associated accounts

In order to load applications onto a Tablet device, you require an account that is linked to the associated provider of this device. For Apple iPads the provider of Applications is iTunes and applications are found by searching through the "iTunes App store". A benefit to the Apple iPad is that pre-paid store cards can be purchased, preventing the need for credit card accounts to be utilised within an organisation. In order to load applications, an iTunes account is required. This can be a generic account for each device or one account across several devices. For this project, separate accounts were required in order to install the 'Airwatch' security system.

Installing and managing applications

Departments/services utilising Tablet technology are encouraged to designate staff members to manage the selection and uploading of applications relevant to the clinical setting. This prevents multiple staff members uploading multiple applications that may not have relevance to the clinical setting. Within the Occupational Therapy department at Alfred Health, staff members are encouraged to search for appropriate applications that may be used clinically. They are then directed to discuss the uploading of these applications with the relevant staff member who will load the application if deemed applicable.

Management of settings

Once again, designated staff members are encouraged to manage the Tablet device settings to prevent unwanted changes to these settings. Designated staff members will be required to spend time understanding the setting required for the Tablet device in order for the device to work most effectively. This education should be conducted in conjunction with your health service's IT department.

Email on tablet devices

Email can be set up on Tablet devices. A generic email account is recommended should the device be used by multiple staff and students. This account will need to be checked regularly in order to empty the mailbox. Staff should be encouraged not to store information on these email accounts. An email account can be useful should staff wish to email photos or documents back to their own personal accounts.

Storage of documents including photos and videos

Many Tablet devices have Photo and Video capability, including the Apple iPad. Staff are encouraged to use these features, however are advised to remove the data from the iPad prior to returning the device for use by other staff members or students. Photos and Videos should be uploaded to an appropriate computer drive with security protection rather than being stored on the device, in line with your organisation's data storage policies. This will ensure the staff member can have appropriate access to their video and photo files but that patient privacy will also be maintained.

Managing Technical issues

It is recommended that any staff member or student utilising a Tablet device should be educated on managing and responding to common technical issues. Staff designated in managing the devices are advised to keep track of common technical issues and note how these issues were resolved. Your organisation's IT department should be consulted if technical issues arise.

Common technical issues experienced on the Apple iPad during this project include:

- Periodic Wi-Fi disconnection
- Telstra 3G connection issues
- Applications freezing
- iPad not working efficiently
- iPad shut down
- Unable to complete software updates
- Unable to complete application updates

Education and Training

Staff and student education is vital in ensuring the Tablet devices are used effectively and staff feel confident in utilising the technology. It is recommended that staff and students be provided with education sessions targeting the operation of these devices.

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