

THE MOTHER OF ALL INVENTIONS

From coffee makers to roller coasters there is at least one piece of technology we can't live without. In our last issue, Bala Kathiresan, CIO of Niagara Health System nominated the telephone. We are continuing the series and asked Matt Morgan to tell us about the one technological invention he couldn't live without, and why.

Matthew Morgan

Matthew Morgan, MD, is VP of Clinical Informatics for Misys Healthcare Systems, and as such provides clinical informatics leadership for Misys. His development and research focus is the electronic health record (EHR) and the establishment of intelligent, computer-based clinician order entry and real-time clinical decision support as well as clinical data warehouse capabilities to support best practices and disease management. His work focuses on real world case studies of the use of the EHR in the prevention of medical errors to increase patient safety and enhancement of clinician decision-making to produce measurable improvements in the quality and efficiency of healthcare delivery.

He also performs dual roles as an assistant professor with the University of Toronto's Department of Medicine and a practising general internist at University Health Network (UHN).

He has published extensively; most recently he was the author of the paper "In Pursuit of a Safe Canadian Healthcare System" in *HealthcarePapers*.

Remember the floppy disc and the wonderful churning noise it made as you transferred tiny word documents? As the original portable storage device, the floppy disc had its time in the lime light, but with its limited storage capacity and its slow transfer speeds it is no longer of much value in today's world of storage hungry MP3s, JPEGs, PPTs and other large files. Today there is a much more powerful way to store and transfer files from one computer to another. This new breed of portable storage devices are so small and so fast at transferring files they are often called "thumb memory drives" or "flash key chain drives." The USB flash drive fits in the palm of your hand and weighs as little as a writing pen. They connect to your computer through the USB (universal serial bus) port and are plug and play, requiring no additional software to operate. These thumb drives or memory sticks come in all shapes and sizes and range from 64 MB to 1GB in storage capacity and deliver read/write transfer rates of up to 15 MB per second. They make transferring large files of any sort from one computer to another a snap.



"The USB flash drive fits in the palm of your hand."

I find these little devices very helpful in both my work life and personal life. At work I no longer have to lug my laptop computer from one place to the next when giving presentations, I simply transfer my PowerPoint slides to my flash drive and take the show on the road. As long as the place where I'm presenting has a computer with a USB port, I'm all set. In addition, people are always asking me for copies of my slides or other files such as word documents and PDF files. Instead of emailing them, I simply hand them my flash drive and let them download the files quickly and easily. Of course, I always try to make sure to retrieve the drive before leaving; they seem to have a habit of walking away.

In my personal life, like most folks, I've been bitten by the digital photography bug. The thumb drive provides me with a great tool for sharing and storing photos. Just like your hard drive, you can create folders and sub-folders on your thumb drive, making searching and cataloging a breeze.

Like all good technology, the USB flash drive continues to evolve, the latest ones are multi-functional, not only do they store and transfer data but can also serve as MP3 players. Some also provide road warriors with interesting mobile utilities such as bookmarking websites, erasing internet history and synchronizing email.

The USB flash drive is a great invention that makes my digital world a little easier to manage and enjoy. To find out more go to www.everythingusb.com