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**Finesse & Success in
Pediatric Home Care**

**Home Health Nurses
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**Home Care's Powerful
Bond with Family
Caregiving**

The Tablet Computer: Home Care's Friend

By Merrily Orsini



Portability and accessibility are key concepts for communicating in the world today. More and more, business is done on the go — which means efficiency is a huge selling point for devices designed to make any type of business portable or “in the cloud.” The laptop computer was one of the first innovations that made working on the go possible; wireless connectively opened up a world of new possibilities. Today’s mobile workers, however, crave something much more compact than a laptop, something that can easily fit in a tote bag or purse. The problem was having to sacrifice functionality for that portability.

No one has been out in front of the mobile device market quite like Apple Inc., which has managed to reshape entire product genres with several of its offerings. The iPod and iPhone, for instance, have become staples of mobile technology for both personal and business use. But it’s clearly the iPad that is changing the way people work. Certainly we can expect innovations to keep flowing in the tablet computer department, and we’ll be watching for what can best meet home care’s needs and tasks. But among tablet devices available today, the iPad tablet has been shown to have numerous beneficial uses for home care agencies because of its capabilities and

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particular design, and all in a single device rather than several.

By the nature of the business model, home care providers have been conducting on-the-go business from the very beginning, and certainly long before the mobile technology and “cloud-based office” trends. Tablet devices like the iPad can make life easier for a home care agency, its caregivers, and its clients — portability is one of the product’s biggest draws. It’s compact and light, which means less weight to lug. It also essentially allows for a virtual office or entertainment center wherever it is. If a home care agency’s scheduling program

can interface with the web, vital client information can be made available safely and securely from anywhere. Also, with some applications that allow file-sharing, lots of other information such as shopping lists, medication information and reminders, and caregiver notes can be stored and organized, cutting down piles of clutter and boosting efficiency.

The iPad’s specific functionality and how it is designed are factors in how this device can maximize productivity and prove useful to home care. A deliberately intuitive design means that the learning curve is minimized, even for the least computer-literate person. There are several YouTube videos out there of children as young as 18 months who have mastered this device’s basic functions! That simplicity could have real implications in helping work with patients with advanced Alzheimer’s or other cognitive impairment, and thousands of apps are available that can be of use to the home care professional. From GPS to help caregivers travel from client to client more efficiently; to text-to-speech programs for easier home assessment note-taking or multitasking; to apps designed to help caregivers organize their individual client responsibilities or a client’s health changes, this product can help get the job done in more ways than one.

Engaging clients in creative ways is an important part of a caregiver's daily job. There are dozens of options for interaction and engagement in all sorts of media. Clients who love to read can download books, magazines and newspapers to keep them mentally engaged and up-to-date on current events. For those with poor vision, Amazon and iTunes offer a wide selection of audio books. iPad and other reader devices can also help caregivers communicate with the hard of hearing — ebooks can be set to use extra large fonts for the visually impaired or can be played aloud in the case of audio books. In its case, the iPad includes screen magnification tools. Music lovers can quickly personalize tunes to their own tastes with applications like Pandora. By entering in a favorite song or artist and rating Pandora's suggestions, seniors can create their own playlists, almost like picking songs on a

jukebox. The iPad is also a good choice for watching movies.

Another potential draw for caregivers and clients, in my experience, is that the iPad is highly interactive. Thousands of interactive games for seniors can be downloaded and played on the iPad including card games, chess, Scrabble, crossword puzzles, arcade games, and more. These games can be a great way to get some "mental exercise" and dexterity training for clients, and of course, they're fun! If a client's family lives far away, applications like Skype or Apple's FaceTime can help him or her see and connect with loved ones who may rarely have the opportunity to visit.

With busy lives and work schedules, caregivers can certainly use a device to make life a little bit easier, and the iPad just might be the "miracle device" we've been waiting for. Although other products and devices can offer the same func-

tions as the iPad separately — such as Amazon's Kindle or Barnes & Noble's Nook e-book readers offering virtual libraries — the iPad's ground-up simplistic design and do-everything functionality in a single device have the potential to serve the home care professional well. From mobility for work to easy-to-use functionality to client entertainment, engagement, and interaction, this little product seems to be able to handle it all.

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