

Self-test questions

The following statements are either true or false (answers on page 27)

5. Only 30% of children with epilepsy can stop treatment with antiepileptic drugs even if they have had no seizures for two years.
6. The withdrawal of antiepileptic drugs should only be considered in seizure-free children if the electroencephalogram is normal.

PDA review

MiniTG – the personal digital assistant version of Therapeutic Guidelines

Melbourne: Therapeutic Guidelines Limited; 2005.

Price: \$125 annual subscription (single licence) for either the Pocket PC or Palm operating system personal digital assistant (PDA)

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MiniTG is a version of the popular series of Therapeutic Guidelines books designed for personal digital assistants (PDA). It therefore inherits the pedigree of solid clinical review and regular revision that has been a key feature of the series. Sensibly the team at Therapeutic Guidelines have used iSilo (<http://www.isilo.com>), a very robust and reliable document reading program, as a platform to run both the Palm and Pocket PC versions of miniTG. Technically miniTG will have required minimal modification of the current CD-based version of the guidelines – eTG complete. Consequently users of eTG complete will find the interface of miniTG very familiar. The only contents of eTG complete not carried over to miniTG are the direct internet links and some ready reference calculators. Indeed, one hopes that other valuable medical references might also adopt this expedient method of converting their CD-based versions to iSilo PDA documents.

The major advantage of miniTG is its portability, allowing referencing of vital clinical information at the bedside or on a house call. The basic topic divisions of the original books of Therapeutic Guidelines are retained: analgesia, antibiotic, cardiovascular, endocrinology, gastrointestinal, neurology, palliative care, psychotropic and respiratory. There is also a useful section containing information about pregnancy and breastfeeding. Each of these topics starts with a succinct 'Getting to know your drugs' section and then follows with selectable hyperlinked clinical problems or conditions. For those familiar with PDAs, the selection of topics is easy using the pointing stylus in a similar fashion to a computer mouse. Within each section there are hyperlinks to related topics or further clinical information. An especially useful feature is the list of tables, figures and boxes at the end of each major specialist area. These allow rapid review of whole topics, for example the comparison of dosage regimens and adverse effects of the

commonly prescribed drugs for Parkinson's disease.

The iSilo platform itself allows format modification to adjust the size and presentation of text so topics are generally quite readable. However, the small size of most PDA screens can be limiting when viewing tables and figures in miniTG. Certainly higher resolution colour PDA screens significantly improve the miniTG display. Furthermore, some PDAs have screens that can convert from portrait to landscape display, rendering the wider tables and figures viewable without the annoyance of constantly having to scroll across the screen.

I tried the Palm PDA version of miniTG on a Palm Tungsten T3 with 64Mb internal memory, a 128Mb memory card, a landscape screen option and with the full registered version of iSilo (US\$20) loaded. Running either in the internal memory or from the card, miniTG was fast and reliable and movement between topics via hyperlinks was seamless. I used miniTG for a two-week period and accessed it over 30 times. Surprisingly, I found myself using it not only at the bedside, but also while in clinic as it was faster to access than the eTG complete on our hospital computer system. On one occasion I was able to use the PDA screen at the bedside to show a patient a diagram of the Epley's manoeuvre I planned to conduct.

Overall, miniTG is a useful clinical tool for the roving clinician. The cost of purchasing the eTG complete (\$250/year) and miniTG separately does seem high given the technical ease of conversion between the two formats. Given that clinic-based doctors who already use eTG complete would probably require miniTG only infrequently, a cheaper bundled price for both products would be welcome.

Minimum system requirements

- Palm or Pocket PC with 10Mb of free storage and 320x240 minimum screen resolution
- the iSilo Document Browser from <http://www.isilo.com> (your iSilo User ID is needed to order miniTG)
- a desktop computer (Mac or PC) to transfer files to your PDA, software for Palm or Pocket PC devices, and USB port to connect to PDA
- a valid email address to receive registration information