

FM *Resident* MONTHLY

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Texting at Work? Be Mindful



If you work with mostly people your age in a somewhat informal work environment, texting etiquette is pretty easy. But if you are texting with a manager (who may be a bit older), or if your work environment is more formal than a startup, there are certain things you need to remember.

Even though it may be a text, it is still a work conversation, according to **Skillcrush.com**. Keep these tips in mind to stay on point with your professional texting etiquette:

- ✓ **DON'T** communicate big, important decisions through text
- ✓ **DON'T** send bad news via text
- ✓ **COOL IT** on the abbreviations
- ✓ **WATCH** your tone
- ✓ **LOOK** at texting as a complement

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Informatics

Health care needs tech-savvy physicians.
First, understand how to apply information
and technology to clinical practice

By J.C. Eliot, Senior Staff Writer

THE SCENARIOS ARE common, and happening daily this fall, in every practice setting in every corner of the country. Family medicine residents, shoes shined, hair trimmed and nails manicured, are showing up for their first day on the job. Office-based, hospital-based, solo practice or university, it doesn't matter: new hires are looking to impress.

One avenue to standing out among the thousands of new physicians joining the workforce is technology. Not just the "I can redo

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your settings on your iPad” kind of technology; a deeper dive into clinical informatics.

“There is a growing field for people in applied health-care informatics, as both medical directors in informatics and chief medical informatics officers [CMIOs],” says Phil Smith, MD, CMIO at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Fla., and author of the 2013 bestseller “Computerized Provider Order Entry Work.” Twenty years ago, “there were very few opportunities. You had to go with academic or software vendors, or a commercial company doing informatics research.”

In just two years, the American Board of Preventive Medicine has certified more than 800 physicians in medical informatics. And the fact of the matter is that when it comes to information, and the technologies surrounding it in our ever-advancing digital world, the medical community has only scratched the service at the point at which physicians, patient, and payers interact. The U.S. healthcare system will need many more clinical informatics experts in the coming decades.

“The main things to understand about informatics is that its really about applying your clinical knowledge to solving workflow issues and leading change



in an organization,” says Dr. Smith, who is board certified in family medicine and is a member of the American Medical Informatics Association’s educational committee. “There are opportunities in informatics for people that are highly analytical and have backgrounds in computer science/engineering. However,

applied healthcare informatics really is more about organizational change, leadership, and working hand-in-hand with fellow clinicians to apply computerized systems into their integrated daily workflow of patient care.

“I believe the family medicine physician is ideal for this kind of work, because

of their exposure to multiple specialties and their understanding of workflow in those specialties. Especially for those that have had clinical practice outside of training programs, because you really need to be able to deal with peers in all specialties. That knowledge as a family physician allows you to see a bigger picture than someone in a single-focus specialty.”

Career Path No. 1

Dr. Smith says physicians have a couple options to start their journey into medical informatics. The first is to focus on your clinical acumen and ability to work with patients and peers, and volunteer on committees and projects. With this, it's best to find an informatics mentor to take you under the wing.

“Basically, learn those skills on the job,” he says. “Build your clinical skills, communication skills, and collaboration skills.”

Once you've got your feet wet and think informatics is a long-term proposition, he suggests pursuing a fellowship.

“It will be required in the future to get your sub-certification, and could be an option for people in the two categories above,” he says, adding both the AMIA and the Association of Medical Directors of Information Systems (AMDIS) are good

“It's not about being a highly technical person. We are welding the bridge between the clinical mind and the technology [mind].”

—Phil Smith, MD

resources. “It's not about being a highly technical person. We are welding the bridge between the clinical mind and the technology [mind].”

Dr. Smith does note the cost of becoming a U.S. physician is high and could be a major obstacle to someone interested in pursuing this path to a medical informatics career. However, the end game can be very rewarding. Similar to physicians who earn an MBA and work their way through a health system to the C-suite, the informatics-focused physician might start at the ground level.

“I had a doctor that worked right out of residency as a manager and got paid as a non-physician manager for a couple

years, then moved into a medical position that really got him where he wanted to be,” he says. “

Career Path No. 2

The second, more direct, path to a career in informatics is to work for an IT company, such as an electronic health record vendor (i.e., Epic or Cerner), or a large database company (i.e., IBM, FAS) or pharmaceutical companies.

“There are plenty of opportunities for people that want to continue practicing medicine and practice informatics,” he says. “I recommended it, if you aren't entering the field as a mature clinician. ... You have to keep practicing in order to have credibility for [business], practicing as a peer and practicing as an informaticist.”

No matter which path you choose, Dr. Smith says it's never too early to tap your interest in technology. Even trainees can jump on the bandwagon.

“Start volunteering now on your local informatics committee,” he says. “Just repeat that when you get your first job. And find out who can bring out the best in you, so if you need to answer that question, you know the answer.” ■

J.C. Eliot is a freelance medical writer in New York City.

THE FACTS AND FIGURES OF PRIMARY CARE → By Jessica Kinsella

67%

No Regrets

Out of 24,000 physicians asked in a 2014 study, 67% of family physicians would choose a medical career again. Only two other types of physicians—internists and infectious disease specialists—had a higher percentage of participants answer in this fashion.

For more information, visit medscape.com.



Connect

Young
physicians
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By Richard Quinn

A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH a mentor can be one of the most important ways to start a career on the right foot, according to management consultant.

Rene Petrin, president and founder of Management Mentors, Inc., says that whether an early-career person is a physician, a car mechanic, or an athlete, choosing the right mentor can be a major boost to a career. Petrin, a human resources professional who founded his Chestnut Hill, Mass.-based firm in 1989, says that early-career doctors looking for mentors need to understand what they're looking for.

"This is about having a relationship," he explains. "The most important thing is seeing that you have simpatico with that person, that there is a connection of some kind. It's not so much about developing your skill sets; it's about having a relationship that is transformational.

"Therefore, personality becomes critical. It's more important than the skill sets."

Petrin cautions that developing skills is important, but it most times is not the role of a mentor. A mentee should look for someone who they can confide in about learning

how to be a professional in that field. The relationship can help teach one how to deal with communication issues, or how to overcome confidence issues, or how to break down walls.

“It’s the difference between a coach and a mentor,” Petrin says. “A mentor takes a personal interest in me, not just my skills.”

Often, a mentoring relationship will develop naturally. Young doctors don’t have to wait, though, as long as they handle the situation professionally.

“I don’t recommend you approach someone and ask them to be your mentor; that’s probably too direct,” he says.

Potential mentees, however, could ask colleagues if they could recommend someone who might be interested in serving as a mentor. Or they could ask co-workers if someone specific would be interested in mentoring them. One could also approach a potential mentor and just strike up a conversation about common interests.

“If you have one or two sessions, and you feel comfortable, you naturally ask the question, ‘I’ve enjoyed this conversation, it’s very helpful for me. I wonder if you’d be willing to serve as a mentor,’” he says.

Many people are scared to ask that question for fear of rejection. Petrin says that’s natural, but notes that the response is often more positive. People asked to serve as mentors often feel flattered.

Once a mentor has been selected, it’s important to structure how the process will work. Tips include:

- Define expectations of the relationship, particularly how often meetings should occur. The industry standard for mentoring is to meet every other week for 60 to 90 minutes. Meetings should at least happen once a month.
- Have a focus. Tell a mentor what you want help with, and how they can help. Otherwise, the relationship may yield little value.
- How will confidentiality work? What can the mentee use publicly from the meetings and what can the mentor share?

It’s a process. But if you choose right, it will change your life. So take the time to choose right.

—*Rene Petrin, president and founder, Management Mentors, Inc., Chestnut Hill, Mass.*

- Define how to address any conflicts that arise
- “Every relationship will run into issues of some kind,” Petrin says. “Discussing that up front, the methods of how to negotiate any issues in the relationship, makes it easier for both parties to actually do it when the time comes.”

Petrin says nearly everyone can benefit from having a mentor, but those seeking the dynamic should understand that like any relationship, it takes hard work to make it blossom. “It’s a process,” he says. “But if you choose right, it will change your life. So take the time to choose right.” ■

Richard Quinn is a freelance author in New Jersey.

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