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Ohio State University doles out Apple devices for students' rigorous program

By Dennis Carter, Assistant Editor

Primary Topic Channel: [Technologies](#)

Ohio State University's medical school has joined the ranks of colleges replacing cumbersome textbooks with the handheld Apple iPod touch this fall.

Ohio State med school officials said the iPod lets students study high-quality images of organs and body parts in the palms of their hands, on the fly--a welcome change from the days of endlessly flipping through textbooks to find pictures and directions for surgical procedures. The iPod allows students to see images from several angles, take short review quizzes for helpful reminders, and access videos documenting the many steps of a surgery or procedure.

The university is one of a handful of institutions to bring iPod technology to its medical students. In July, officials at the University of Michigan Medical School unveiled the "Dr. iPod" program, which lets students watch and review lectures at any time. The iPod initiative was launched three years after the system was piloted using a video clip that tested the iPod's video capabilities.

Medical students at Temple University listen to heart murmurs using the iPod after studies showed that repetition is the key to honing stethoscope skills and diagnosing heart conditions. In 90-minute sessions, students listen to five kinds of heart murmurs up to 400 times each using the iPod, according to the university's web site.

Temple University officials said training students to identify potentially life-threatening heart conditions by listening to abnormal heart beats would save money on pricey tests designed to classify which treatment would cure a murmur.

OSU medical students will receive iPod touches complete with medical software over the next two years, officials said.

Justin Harper, a third-year OSU medical student who helped launch the iPod touch program, said students' familiarity with the iPod promotes consistent use of a tool that will reinforce in-depth lectures and classroom lessons.

"It has a coolness factor to it, and students want to carry them," said Harper, 28, adding that one iPod application helps students calculate dosages for patients. "With the iPod, it's convenient, it's small, and by merely having it, it encourages people to use it more. It makes it possible to carry thousands of flash cards and hundreds of articles, stuff you could not have possibly carried before."

OSU med school officials said iPods let students study and review at their own convenience.

"The personal digital assistant puts a wealth of information at the fingertips of our students. They can study when they want and where they want," said Catherine Lucey, vice dean for education at OSU. "If they are seeing a patient and a

question arises, they can find the answer instantly."

Incorporating the iPod into everyday use, Lucey said, is not a trendy move that caters to a generation of students who have listened to music and watched movies on the device for years. The iPod touch's applications will help students take better care of their patients, she said.

"We are committed to providing our students with the best tools available, to help them provide outstanding patient care," said Lucey, adding that she expects iPods to become a common tool for medical school students across the U.S.

Higher education embraces the iPod, but a May 2007 study released by the University of Michigan and Michigan State University showed that extended, close-range exposure to an iPod could interfere with pacemakers. When the portable music player was held two inches from a patient's chest for as little as five seconds, pacemakers misread the heart rate. In one case, a pacemaker turned off.

Harper said OSU medical students haven't encountered any problems with iPod electrical interference. Laptops and a bevy of other electronic hospital equipment also emit magnetic waves that could disrupt a pacemaker, he said, but no interference has been reported.

"I don't think it would be that detrimental," Harper said. "We're by no means holding it anywhere near a patient for any amount of time."

*Photo courtesy of Cori Wong at the University of California, San Francisco.*

**Links:**

[Ohio State University iPod touch initiative](#)

[Temple University iPod program](#)

[Study: iPod-pacemaker interference](#)

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