

A&L's Head Office:	(905) 886-8066
Oak/Miss/Bramp/Ajax:	(416) 520-3238
Ottawa Office:	(613) 737-0677
Timmins Office:	(705) 268-4922
Windsor Office:	(519) 977-6050
California Office:	(760)-723-8121
Web Link Address:	www.anl.com

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◆ The Future Is Now.

# Virus Prevention

**J**ust how much can an e-mail called 'I Love You,' hurt?

First of all, if you see a message 'Re: I Love You,' get excited but for different reasons. Not that someone doesn't love you...quite the contrary. Someone is out to upset you and your computer by spreading a virus. Delete the file IMMEDIATELY!

Depending on how far you've proceeded, it can hurt quite badly. This article may be a little late for some people but it may help you in the future. The virus 'I Love You,' is a program that will overwrite and rename or add the letters .VBS on the end of the extension to any files with the extension .JPG, .JPEG, .VBS, .VBE, .JS, .JSE, .CSS, .WSH, .SCT, and .HTA. This causes problems in opening files with the extensions listed above. It will appear as if those files don't exist; or if you have programs with the extension, the program will not operate properly, if at all.

If you have been infected, it will attempt to attach the viral program onto your e-mail address book and will automatically be sent out to everyone.

Also, this worm has another trick up its sleeve in that it tries to download and install an executable file called WINBUGSFIX.EXE from the Internet. This .exe file is a password stealing program that will e-mail any cached passwords to the host site, thus giving them your password and access to all your password protected data.

As you are reading this article, there are already other variants of the virus reeking havoc with individuals and companies alike, deleting entire operating systems and hard drives.

### How to inoculate yourself!

Unfortunately, there is no absolute way that you can protect yourself if you use e-

mail, the Internet, or share files amongst other users. If you do not have e-mail, use the Internet, or share files (inserting disks from others into your own computer), you won't have a problem, but everyone who is reading this receives as a minimum an R.A. file via disk or modem.

However, you can lessen the risk by:

- 1) Not opening files from people you are not familiar with. On occasion, we will receive e-mail from people who visit our website. We will read people's e-mail but we generally will not open files we're not familiar with. A suggestion would be to ask people to send a short note along with the attachment explaining what the attachment is.

- 2) Installing a commercial Anti-Virus program and ensuring that it is CONSTANTLY UPDATED. Many people have purchased these programs yet don't update them. New viruses like the one listed above and other mutations are unknown to older anti-virus programs. As in the medical field, you first have to identify the new and unknown virus before a cure can be created.



# EFFECTIVE TELEPHONE MANAGEMENT

The Key To Practice Efficiency

Don Price, B.Sc., M.B.A.

*This is one of a series of articles by Don Price on Practice Management which have been appearing in recent issues of Softwords. Don Price, B.Sc., M.B.A., is a Practice Management Consultant based in Ottawa, Ontario. He travels extensively throughout Canada helping physicians and their staff tune up and revitalize their offices through consultations and seminars. In addition, Mr. Price publishes workbooks and two bi-monthly newsletters for physicians and medical office staff. He can be reached at (613) 247-8705 or fax (613) 247-8706.*



**H**ow your telephone is answered - or not - provides every caller with an impression of your practice. You may be the most skilled diagnostician and caring physician in the exam room, but if a patient or another doctor has to put up with frustrations every time they call your office, your reputation will suffer.

You may be the last to find out if the telephone service you provide to your patients is not adequate. If patients constantly reach busy signals, are put on hold when they call your office, or feel your receptionist doesn't treat them as well as they'd like, you need to know.

There are several ways you can find out if the telephone receptionist in your office is providing the right impressions.

1. Ask your patients. Provide patients over a selected period of time with a questionnaire, which includes such questions as:

- Was your phone call to our office answered promptly and courteously?
- Were you put on hold? If so, for how long?
- Do you ever reach a busy signal when calling our office? If so, how many times did you reach a busy signal when you last tried to contact us?
- What impressions did you gain of our office over the telephone?
- In what ways do you think we can improve our telephone service?

Ask patients to complete the questionnaire before they leave the practice. They can answer anonymously if they wish. If they are unable to complete the questionnaire in your office, provide them with a stamped, addressed envelope so they can mail it back to you.

2. Talk to the staff and physicians in other medical offices with whom you have frequent contact. You can send them a letter and a brief questionnaire, similar to the one you provide to patients. Let them know that you are trying to improve the service you provide by telephone, and ask them for any suggestions.

It is important that you contact the staff in these offices, not just the physicians, as the staff are the ones who call your office most often.

3. Call your office on your main telephone line (not the private number) from the hospital or home to find out how your receptionist comes across when she answers the phone. You can also ask a colleague or your spouse to make these calls. The calls should be at different times of the day, such as first thing in the morning when the lines are usually

busiest, to the quieter times of the day. Take note of how the phone is answered - it shouldn't be with a quick: "Doctor's office, please hold", but there should be an identifier, such as: "Good morning, Dr. Jones' office. May I put you on hold for a moment while I finish with another caller?" Also, note how many times a busy signal is reached and how long you are left on hold. This will give you an accurate picture of what callers to your office have to go through in order to book an appointment or to leave a message.

Once you have collected all the data from patient and medical office questionnaires, and your own research, list the most common complaints in decreasing order of frequency. This will give you the facts you need to start making improvements. Most complaints about telephone management, whether it is being put on hold, reaching a busy signal or a lack of courtesy, can be tracked to their source: that is, it is usually the least skilled and most inexperienced worker who is put in the position of telephone receptionist. The person who answers the phone in any office should be valued for his/her telephone manner, public relations skills and ability to portray your office in the best light possible.

### Train your staff well

Everyone who answers your phone is representing you, and you must train him or her well if you want the image of your practice to be enhanced.

1. Improve staff attitudes towards phone reception. If you undervalue your telephone receptionist, the chances are that she won't understand her importance to the practice and the image she creates for your patients. Set minimum standards for answering the phone, and ensure that anyone who answers the phone for your office does so in an acceptable manner.

2. Improve staff training. Few receptionists are provided with any training at all. Most medical offices have very busy phone lines, and they need to be managed well if you don't want patients reaching busy signals or being forgotten when they are on hold. Provide written procedures for your staff for handling the phones and taking messages.

3. Provide back up for your telephone receptionist during the busiest times of the day. Having someone else answer each call and put the caller on hold while the main receptionist finishes with the first caller is good practice. Not only does this ensure that all calls are answered by the third ring, but a caller can be put on hold by someone who has the time to

**Don Price***(Continued from previous page)*

check first whether this is an emergency, and the caller can then agree to remain on hold or call back later. This takes the pressure off the receptionist and allows her to handle each call courteously.

4. Keep your telephone receptionist at her desk as much of the time as possible. If your receptionist is delivering charts to exam rooms, photocopying in a back room, or searching for a file, she won't be able to answer the phone promptly. Other staff should be delegated to do these tasks so that the receptionist is always within reach of the phone. There is always work that can be done at the receptionist's desk during quieter times of the day. Using a cordless headset is a good alternative for offices where the receptionist has to leave her desk area.

5. If you don't use voice mail, investigate whether this could be a worthwhile addition to your phone system. If you do use voice mail, make sure that all messages are accessed on a regular basis and that calls are returned promptly. As I think everyone will agree, there is nothing so frustrating as calling an office and not being able to speak to 'a real person'. Always have this option available on your phone system, and provide patients with handouts advising them of voice mail options and how often messages are accessed and calls returned.

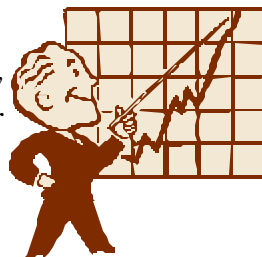
6. Always ask your staff for their input. The staff will generally have a much better idea than you of the problems that occur, and often how to solve them.

Developing and improving your telephone management systems, training your staff well and providing callers to your office with a positive image of your practice is one of the greatest public relations exercises you can bring into your office.

*(Don Price & Associates has published a series of training workbooks for medical office staff on Telephone Management. For information on purchasing these books, call 1-800-458-1900.)*

**A&L Software Training**

*Be sure to see page 4 for details on new training sessions now being offered by A&L on their medical software packages.*

**S'ports Ball 2000***What a gala event*

A&L thanks our many clients who joined us at the S'ports Ball 2000 Gala or made generous donations in lieu of attending. Included were Drs. Chris Jyu, Rose Kung, Ford Luk, Pat McElgunn, Gordon Ng, Karen Scully, Jim Swan, Chingying Tse, Clement Wong, David Wong, Jim Swan and also Mr. Peter Berwick from the CMA. The Ontario Medical Secretary's Association, Windsor Branch, also kindly gave a donation. Thank you to all.

The S'ports Ball 2000 was an evening to remember. The range of dress and age of participants was so diverse and yet there was something for everyone! The 6 to 7 p.m. reception gave one time to examine the variety of items available in the silent and live auction. For the silent auction there were dinners for two, four and even one for ten, a superb golf bag, several laser skin procedures kindly donated by Dr. P. McElgunn, getaway weekends at different hotels, and the best (if you're a sports fan) was a basketball signed by the Raptors. The live auction was even better and included an Oiler's hockey shirt signed by the team, and a poster of the 1967 Stanley cup winners signed by all the 1967 Leaf players. For a small donation one could test one's skill shooting baskets, putting golf balls and tossing a football through a target. Success after three tries and you won a prize!

A gymnastic club of girls aged 5 to 13 thrilled us with jumps, cartwheels and rolls on the stage. Red Kelly brought messages to us how sport can become part of our youth development and thereafter Mr. Danny Diaz entertained all age groups with music from every decade and a few jokes too. He brought the house down.

Fun and entertainment aside, the S'ports Ball 2000 was also a financial success and therefore will enable the S'port For Kids Foundation to provide help to many children and groups who want to be involved in organized sports.

There are countless numbers of children still living in poverty. In the past, we heard that increasing numbers of kids were dropping out of school but now we are hearing that rising numbers of kids are getting involved in violent activities including gang fights, and shooting incidents.

S'port For Kids Foundation is using sports activities as a vehicle to help children develop their physical and emotional skills. All kids like to play and therefore team sports can be used to develop discipline, responsibility, commitment, and social skills. What better way is there to help our young people become good team players in the corporate world and, most importantly, better citizens? The Board of Directors of the S'port For Kids Foundation is committed to giving our children a chance for a brighter and promising future and the success of the first annual S'ports Ball Gala was a giant leap towards that goal.

Expect a bigger and better event in 2001. A&L hopes more doctors and friends will be able to attend. Information will follow in future newsletters. Thanks to all who attended and thoughtfully donated time and money to make the first S'ports Ball Gala such a spectacular occasion.

More information for S'port For Kids Foundation is available on the Weblink @ [www.sportforkids.on.ca](http://www.sportforkids.on.ca).



# User's Corner

**A&L MEDICAL SYSTEM (DOS APPLICATION)**

On the recent A&L Medical System's maintenance contract renewal orders, you may have noticed the inclusion of PST. The government informed A&L in April 2000 that PST should always have been collected. After much debate with the government, A&L is forced to absorb the previous costs and now unfortunately charge PST on all new invoices. You will notice the PST will be calculated in your total renewal fee.

The **A&L Medical System** has a feature of which you may not be aware. In the calendar you can bill under any doctor in the system if different doctors have seen this patient for the same service within the month. After adding the first service, bring up the calendar and when in change mode the arrow keys will now move a highlight around the calendar. If you press enter on a highlighted date it will toggle on or off. If you press a key that corresponds to a doctor on the system it will place that doctor's initial on the date. If you press [F8] the system will now generate a separate bill for each of the highlighted days for the appropriate doctor by making copies of the original bill.

**A&L MEDICAL SYSTEM AND A&L HERO\***

Transmitting claims frequently can prevent many problems.

If submission is done only once a month on the 18<sup>th</sup> and if for any reason a modem or hardware failure occurs, it may be too late to correct the problem before the deadline. With all the claims still not submitted the doctor would not receive payment the following month. Submit frequently to receive the full monthly payment and to prevent frayed nerves at cut-off time.

**A&L HERO\***

The A&L HERO\* program now offers claims submission via EDT. The procedures at your end (batching & transmitting) remain unchanged but instead of the claims being transferred to tape and taken to the Ministry by HTN, your claims are forwarded on to Kingston electronically. The advantages of EDT are:

1. Error claims come back electronically within 48 hours
2. Notice directly from MOH that the previous batch was accepted or rejected.
3. The cutoff is no longer noon but 4 pm on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

You may also find that claims dated as late as the 24<sup>th</sup> of the previous month are paid in the following month and so your first RA payment through EDT may be larger than expected. To use EDT to its full advantage, claims should be transmitted a minimum of once a week. In fact, A&L recommends all clients submit claims a minimum of once a week.

## User Training

Just in time for your office staff for the upcoming summer, training is now available weekly at the office of A&L year round! Starting immediately, every **Friday between 1 and 5pm**, A&L is offering staff training of the A&L Medical System (DOS), the A&L HERO\*, or the A&L Document Console at a reduced price. Train up to 4 people from the same office per visit at the low cost of \$85 (plus taxes) for up to 2 hours. (Additional hours are \$45/hr (plus taxes) charged by the hour). Just complete the form below and fax or mail it to A&L. **PLEASE NOTE: Two weeks advanced notice is required - offer available to current A&L Software Maintenance subscribers only. Fax registration to A&L at (905) 886-6617.**

### Training Registration Form

Doctor/Clinic \_\_\_\_\_ Training Date Requested \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Staff Attending \_\_\_\_\_

Training Requested ( <i>Check one</i> ):	A&L Medical System (DOS Application) _____	Fees for 2 hours \$85.00
	A&L HERO* _____	+GST \$ 5.95
	A&L Document Console _____	+PST \$ 6.80
		<b>TOTAL \$97.75</b>

Names of Attendees: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: (*Please print*) \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_