

Get smart

Automatic text will save time and keystrokes.

AUTOTEXT is a useful tool in all clinical software packages because most GPs use either LetterWriter or Microsoft Word as the word processor.

For example, I am working with a community health centre in Melbourne to develop a single GP management plan/team care arrangement (GPMP/TCA) template rather than a template for each of the major chronic diseases. The key to this is the smart use of autotext.

The first part of the template contains the common elements of all the GPMP/TCAs — the patient demographics, the GP details and the standard fields of medications, past history, allergies/warnings, plus fields for patient problems/needs.

The specific chronic disease information for the patient management section of the TCA (eg, diabetes, COPD, osteoarthritis, cardiovascular disease/coronary heart disease) was created as a separate autotext entry for each of the chronic diseases. The process undertaken was:

- The text for the management of the chronic disease was written in a blank LetterWriter document in Medical Director (you could also create it in Word and copy and paste to LetterWriter). Because of the limitations of LetterWriter this had to be written in plain text (no bold, underlining or italic).
- Once complete, all the text was highlighted ('Control + A') and copied ('Control + C').
- This text was added as an autotext item — from the 'Edit' menu select 'Auto Text'.
- Click on the 'Add' button and then press 'Control + V' to paste in the text.
- Type in the shortcut (eg, DIAB for diabetes) and make available to all doctors, then press 'OK' and 'Close'.

This process is repeated for each of the targeted chronic diseases. An additional autotext shortcut was created for a patient information sheet for each disease. An 'Office Use Only' section was built into the template to prompt clinicians to choose the correct shortcut.

Once the GP or health worker begins work on the GPMP/TCA and gets to the TCA section, they simply type in the shortcut and press 'Enter' for the template to be filled with the relevant information.

To create autotext shortcuts in LetterWriter that are specific to you, remember to make sure there is no tick in the 'Available to all doctors?' box.

For those practices with clinical software that uses Microsoft Word it is even better, because the autotext features allow formatting and even the use of graphics.

The process for autotext is similar in Word — create the text, highlight it, go to the 'Insert' menu, then 'Autotext' > 'Autotext'. Type a shortcut in the field 'Enter autotext entries here' and then press 'OK'.

In Word my autotext

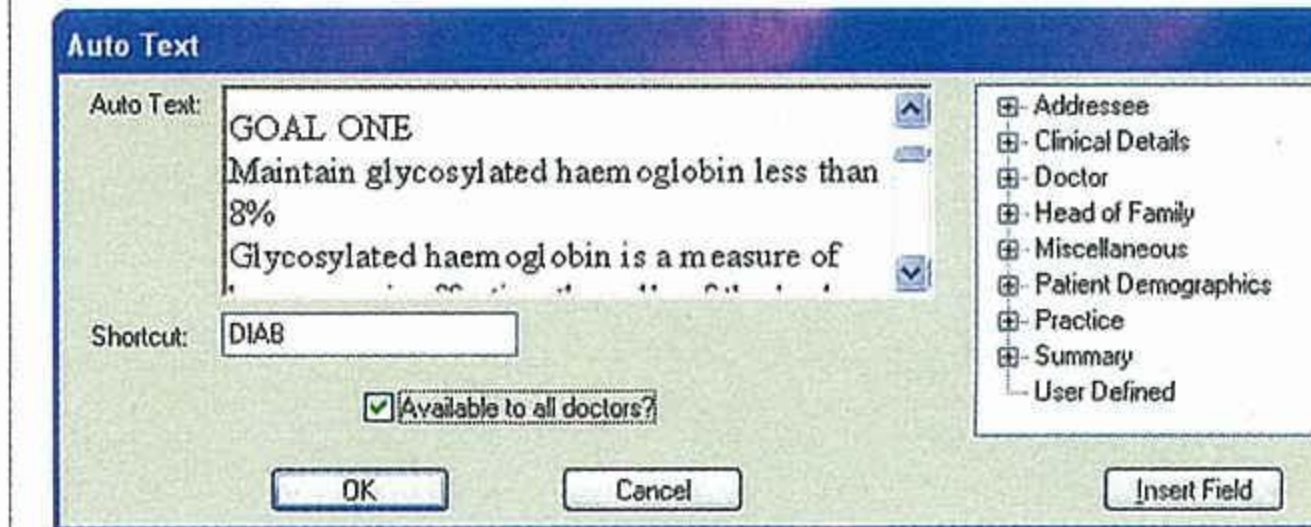
shortcuts include a letterhead, which includes the division's logo (shortcut: 'LH'), a fax cover sheet (shortcut: 'FAX') and my signature line (shortcut: 'sig'). You type your shortcut and press 'F3' and your autotext item is placed in your document.

If you find yourself retyping similar information, think autotext — it will save you a lot of time. ●



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