

Computers

# Have wireless, will travel



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The latest in broadband technology makes keeping up-to-date a breeze.

**W**IRELESS technology allows GPs to access the Internet wherever they happen to be.

I recently bought a 3G network modem card that fits into my computer's USB port (pictured right). All the major communications companies (including Apple and its iPhone) have similar and variously priced options (\$35-\$70 a month) using the same wireless technology.

It means I can go almost anywhere in Australia, turn on my laptop, plug in my USB modem and have instant internet access. On recent interstate and regional trips it worked without a hitch.

It meant not having to rely on the locals to provide Internet access, and it was easy to use with download speeds that were more than acceptable. On Fraser Island in Queensland, it took just five minutes to check my email each day.

This allowed me to keep my finger on the pulse back at work, so that on my return after 10 days away I didn't have to spend the first three hours catching up on email.

The setup works even better if you have remote access to your work computer. For this to work there are a few simple things you need to do:

- Leave your work computer on at all times but turn off the monitor.
- Have a plain desktop background (no photos).
- Don't work remotely on files that use a lot of graphics (plain text such as clinical notes are the easiest to use).

You use the modem card to log on to your work computer. For example, while in Darwin I was quickly able to access my work computer back in Melbourne and retrieve important files I had forgotten to take with me.



For practising GPs it means you can do some work from home without carrying files backwards and forwards, which avoids the problem of having more than one version of the same document.

GPs who visit nursing homes are increasingly using these technologies to link back to the clinical software on their practice desktop computer. A little bit of tweaking by your IT person means you can also organise to print scripts at the nursing home.

Nurses or GPs who do health assessments in the home (item 702) can link back to their clinical software at the surgery and complete the assessment in real time while with the patient. One or two completed health assessments easily pay for the 3G card's monthly fee.

I no longer carry files around with me. If I need to do some Medical Director work I log in remotely. Even when I am on holiday and my CEO phones to say he desperately needs to place an ad on our website, I can do it.

I pay \$60 a month for 1GB of downloads per month. You can get deals in the \$35 range with up to 6GB of data. As with anything like this, shop around and ask your colleagues or your division information management officer for advice. ●

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