Using a Pen Based Windows XP Tablet PC for Data Collection: Development of a Mobile System for Health Care Settings

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This presentation covers the development and implementation of a data collection effort using Pen Based Windows XP Tablet PCs.

This study collects information on respondents receiving outpatient substance abuse services and health care providers delivering those services. The study is being conducted in six states and one tribal organization. The CAPI (computer assisted personal interview) instruments were especially designed for Tablet PCs using Blaise. The tablets selected for this study are Motion Computer's Model LS800. These devices provide a unique mix a standard computing environment (Windows XP with Table Extensions) coupled with small size and modest weight (8.94 x 6.69 x 0.87 inches 2.2 pounds). This provides a standard development platform that can be used well in a data collection effort that requires the interviewer to be mobile.

Tablets were chosen over laptops due to their light weight, ergonomic design, and capabilities. Their design allows field staff members to hold them for long periods of time in mobile survey settings including emergency rooms and health clinics where desks might not be available.

Key topics of this presentation include the logistics of using the tablet PC, the unique capabilities of the tablet PC including signature capture for respondent informed consent (handwriting character recognition), security concerns, usability issues, and project modifications for field deployment.

As this is a continuing study, this presentation includes observations from field staff and an update on study progress.