"Yes, I love technology"

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The real problem is not whether machines think, but whether men do.

—B.F. Skinner

As a radiologist, it is hard not to be in love with the technology that surrounds us, likely more so than any other specialty. We sit at computers and do things with them. We speak into microphones and have machines convert our speech to text. We control big machines that scan patients. The machines are doing okay, or at least doing their part — Skinner had that spot on. We just need to cooperate. I've been thinking about this lately because of one completely hysterical event.

I have gone off before about outside examinations. They are what they are. We have achieved some kind of symbiosis with reading them and having access to them. We happily put them in our archive to have available. On rare occasions, we get paid some for reading them, and we use them to compare with our own studies. I guess it is a net positive thing, but it isn't without occasional problems. We still have a high volume of "drop in" disks—a clinician who you work with a lot, clutching a disk to his white coat. "Please, pretty please? Just a quick look at this exam? The patient is in my clinic, and I just have to review the images with you. I promise not to use your name and relate this correctly and word-for-word in the record."

Okay, here's the thing. If I had not witnessed this personally, I would not believe someone telling me this story. And you may not believe it, but it is true. Swear. The PC in our reading room for outside disks is not on the network, and, therefore, can't put a virus into the system. It is a little old, but functional with a CD drive on the front. A "clinical colleague" wandered in, walked up to the machine, and JAMMED THE DISK INTO THE SPACE UNDER THE CD DRIVE. Completely and utterly. The disk disappeared and was no longer seen. Lo and behold, nothing happened. No program startup and no images appeared. He looked confused. I bit my tongue. "It's not loading. Why isn't it loading?" "Hmmm, maybe because you jammed it into the side of the box?" "Huh?" With a small touch of showmanship, I cycled the empty CD drive, just above the potential space below it, which was now filled with a patient CD. "Oh. Well, can I get it back?" We couldn't. "Hello? IT? You won't believe this."

Fast forward hours into the day, and our IT guy popped the box open, and it GOT BETTER. We gathered to see the disk removed, and there were THREE CDs in there. Presumably, the other violators were shy about indicating their error in inserting disks into nonexistent slots. In my mind, I see them slinking away from the PC, covering their faces. Do you return those disks to the patient with a story?

"I love technology." Mahalo.

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