Buffett Says Jobs's Transplant is 'Material Fact'

06.26.09
Dan Moren, Macworld.com

Savvy billionaire super-investor Warren Buffett is the latest to chime in on Steve Jobs's "secret" liver transplant.

In an interview with CNBC, the full transcript of which is available on the network's "Warren Buffet Watch" blog—its goal, apparently, is "Keeping Track of America's Billionaire Next Door," I suppose in case he gets absent-minded and wanders off—Buffett had the following to say about Jobs

Certainly Steve Jobs is important to Apple. So it's a material fact. Whether he is facing serious surgery or not is a material fact. Whether I'm facing serious surgery is a material fact. Whether (General Electric CEO) Jeff Immelt is, I mean, so I think that's important to get out. They're going to find out about it anyway so I don't see a big privacy issue or anything of the sort.

The old, country Buffett does not use the term "material fact" lightly—that's actually a regulatory term referring to those details publicly-traded companies are required to disclose to investors. Meanwhile, others have argued that Apple and Jobs did their duty by announcing Jobs's medical leave of absence back in January.

And, of course, among the directors of Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway—whose Web site, incidentally, looks like it dates from about 1947; go ahead, look. I'll wait... right?—lurks the investor's longtime friend and fellow billionaire, Bill Gates, suggesting that perhaps—aw, never mind. You know, Bill Gates's retirement has taken all the fun out of concocting conspiracy theories centered around him.

Still, the most perplexing issue here is the fact that CNBC has an entire blog devoted to watching Warren Buffett, as though he might suddenly decide to rampage through downtown Tokyo, buying companies left and right.

Steve Jobs, Apple's CEO, is Back at Work

6.29.09
John D. Sutter CNN

Apple CEO Steve Jobs is back on the job after a six-month medical leave, the company said Monday.

"Steve Jobs is back to work. He is at Apple a few days a week and working from home the other days," Apple spokesman Steve Dowling said. "We're glad to have him back."

Dowling would not comment further on specifics.

Jobs's return may do little to quell the tech community's obsession with his health and future role at the hip tech company. Bloggers and tech-news writers are asking many questions about Jobs' return, including: Would Apple be fine without its famous chief executive? What does Jobs' health mean for Apple stock? And why has Jobs' health been such a drooled-over story?

Jobs, a 54-year-old pancreatic cancer survivor, had a liver transplant about two months ago. Apple, maker of the iPhone, iPods and Mac computers, had remained mum on Jobs' status except to repeat, over and over, that Jobs would return to work by the end of June.

There have been online posts by CNBC and the UK's Telegraph saying that Apple's chief executive made a brief return to the company's Cupertino, California, headquarters last week.

But the timing isn't the most important piece of this story. What Jobs means to Apple and to the tech world has more impact.

Here's what some of the online community is saying:

The BBC has an interesting post on why Jobs has become such a tech rock star and why personalities are so important in the tech community:

"A big part has to do with how he has transformed Apple and its products into some of the most talked-about in the world. And, of course, there is the whole issue of his health five years after his battle with pancreatic cancer and what it means to the future of this publicly-traded company," Maggie Shiels writes on the site's dot.life blog.

"Mr Jobs appears to be a complete enigma. He doesn't give interviews; he is described as a genius and a visionary; he doesn't want to talk about the past and he only wants to focus on the future."

Apple has done just fine without Jobs -- and because of him, according to Alex Pham of the Los Angeles Times.

"Although such prominent investors as Warren Buffett fretted last week about the company's future without its charismatic chief executive, longtime observers say Jobs has built an institutional mirror of himself in Apple with senior executives who share many of his values and outlook," Pham writes.

Some say Jobs' return will have little effect on the direction Apple takes in the near term.

"He's an iconic figure that everybody wants around. He's the world's greatest salesman and that's irreplaceable," Gene Munster, a senior research analyst at Piper Jaffray, told CNN. "But as far as the product direction and the product quality, the road map for the next five years is already in place [at Apple]."

PC Magazine takes a similar slant, writing Jobs likely will start a new role at Apple upon his return. He'll be less of the company's day-to-day face and more of its visionary.

Apple Cracks Down on Gift Card Fraud

06.23.09
Ginny Mies, pcworld.com

It all seems innocent enough: Someone received an iTunes gift card for their birthday, but they don't have an iPod, so they're selling it on eBay. And to encourage you to snap it up, they're offering the gift card at a price that's $10 or $20 less than its face value. Sounds like too good a deal to pass up, right? Unfortunately, there's a strong possibility that the gift card was bought with a stolen credit card or was hacked (see Hacked: $200 iTunes Gift Card for Only $2.60). For a while, people appeared to be using such gift cards without repercussion. But more recently, Apple seems to be quietly mounting a campaign against fraudulent iTunes gift card offenders.

A few rumors began popping up on forums and blogs across the Web about people whose iTunes accounts were permanently disabled after they purchased content with gift cards bought on eBay. When your account is disabled, you permanently lose access to all of the iTunes Store purchases on your computer (unless you back up your library or keep everything on your iPod/iPhone). One guy reported that he had lost his entire library of iTunes Store content, worth more than $5,000, after he used multiple $50 iTunes gift cards he bought on eBay.

My quick search for iTunes gift cards yielded 155 results on eBay. "iTUNES GIFTCARD $25!!!! GREAT DEAL" read one listing, which put a $20 price tag on a card with a face value of $25. Another listing advertised a $50 gift card for $40. The deals aren't unbelievably great, but I suppose that the savings would add up if you bought gift cards frequently enough.

So what's the official word on this situation from Apple? I couldn't find any answers in the iTunes Gift Card FAQ or from Apple's customer support, so I consulted Jason Roth, Apple's media contact for iTunes. Roth told me that Apple works hard to combat fraud and that the company's policy is clearly outlined in the iTunes terms of service. After some digging, I found this statement: "Apple reserves the right to close customer accounts and request alternative forms of payment if a Gift Certificate, iTunes Card, Content Code or Allowance is fraudulently obtained or used on the iTunes Store."

Roth also said that Apple support gives customers who use fraudulent cards plenty of warning that their accounts may be deactivated so that they'll have a chance to back up their content. If your account is closed, you can appeal to Apple to have it reopened, but the chances of that tactic working are pretty slim.

Undoubtedly some sellers are innocently offering legitimate gift cards on eBay, but buying any sort of gift card—iTunes or not—on eBay is still risky. If the temptation is too strong to resist, check the seller's account history, read their reviews, and contact them directly about the card. Ask them where they are located, where they got the card, and whether they can send you the physical card directly. If they're located outside of the United States but selling a U.S. gift card, the likelihood that the card is hacked or stolen goes up. And if they will only e-mail you the card's code—not the card itself—you risk buying a code that multiple people have already received.

The most important thing to look out for, though, is whether the seller lists multiple cards with discounts over $10. The more such cards a seller has, the likelier they are to be fraudulent.

New Mac Laptops Use Batteries Sealed for Power

06.24.09
by Walter S. Mossberg The Wall Street Journal

The majority of laptop computers come with removable batteries. This approach allows you to pop in a fresh spare when your battery runs out of juice between charges, and to easily replace a battery when its lifespan is over.

But there's a dirty little secret about removable-battery laptops owned by average consumers: Hardly anybody buys extra batteries. Research firm NPD estimates that fewer than 5% of consumers buy a spare. So, a small trend has begun in the industry: More electronic products are being designed with their rechargeable batteries sealed inside. For instance, Dell's (DELL) new high-end laptop, the Adamo, has a sealed battery, as does the excellent Flip pocket video camera.

The leading proponent of this idea is Apple (AAPL), which has often led the industry in introducing or removing components from computers. This month, Apple unveiled two revised MacBook Pro laptops with higher-capacity, sealed-in batteries. In fact, Apple's entire line of laptops now uses sealed batteries, except for one low-end MacBook model from last year's series.

Apple says this makes sense because sealing in the batteries lets the company make them larger, without adding heft to the laptops. Apple says the two models are the same size and weight as their predecessors, yet their battery capacity has grown by 33% and 46%, respectively.

And, Apple asserts, it has come up with some software technology that allows these sealed batteries to last up to five years in typical use. The company claims that is almost triple the industry average for removable batteries and is longer than the typical time consumers keep the computer, thus making it far less likely you'll need to replace a dead battery. Apple says it is able to seal in bigger batteries without making the machines larger because the company can compensate by shedding the casings, internal housings and other components needed by replaceable power packs.

The 13-inch MacBook Pro

I've been testing these two new Apple laptops, the 13-inch MacBook Pro and the 15-inch MacBook Pro, using my own harsh battery test, which I apply to all laptops I review. The results were excellent. These two new Apple laptops scored among the highest battery lives between charges of any laptop I have ever tested with a battery that fits entirely inside the machine's dimensions, without sticking out of the back or bottom and adding weight.

Mossberg

The smaller of the two machines lasted a few minutes shy of five hours in my test. And the larger one lasted five hours and 21 minutes. I estimate that, in a more normal usage scenario, both machines would come close to Apple's claim of around seven hours between charges—essentially a full workday of unplugged use. Those numbers are likely to obviate the need for spare batteries for the majority of average consumers.

There are some important caveats. I was unable to verify Apple's claim that these sealed batteries can be fully recharged up to 1,000 times, and thus, last around five years. Second, if and when the sealed batteries do become unable to hold an adequate charge, the entire computer must be returned to Apple for a new battery. The company says that, if you do this at an Apple store, it's a same-day process and, at least on the 13-inch model, the price of a new battery is the same as what Apple formerly charged for a new removable battery. But it's still more of a hassle.

Also, there are users—like people who work on very long flights—for whom replaceable batteries will always be a necessity. These users will want the option, unavailable on the new Macs, to pop in an extra-strength battery.

Finally, while Apple has cut the prices of these two new laptops, they are still pricey compared with similar-sized models from other companies. The 13-inch model starts at $1,199, and the 15-inch model starts at $1,699. Like all Macs, these computers have, in my opinion, a better operating system, better built-in software and better security than their Windows competitors. But you can get competing machines for hundreds of dollars less.

In my battery test, I turn off all power-saving features, leave the Wi-Fi network on, crank up the screen to 100% brightness, and play a continuous loop of music. That maximizes some of the biggest power hogs on a laptop. In normal use, a typical owner would likely use the power-saving features, turn the screen down a bit, have Wi-Fi off some of the time, and wouldn't be running the hard disk constantly.

Neither of my test machines used the energy-saving, but costly, solid-state drives that are slowly replacing mechanical hard disks. And my test models both used integrated graphics chips, which suck less power than the more potent discrete graphics offered on the 15-inch model.

Still, I believe that these new MacBook Pros prove that sealed batteries can result in a very good experience for average users.

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Steve Jobs

"Things will be very different for him and his team," Tim Bajarin writes for the magazine.

"Part of the reason is that Jobs has had a near-death health issue to deal with, and he may now realize that his most important role will be to create a vision that can be carried forward for decades, not just the next product cycle."

Some bloggers have criticized Apple for not saying more about Jobs' illness.

The chief executive's health affects the company's stock price, and investors should be kept more in the loop, writes Bill Taylor, a blogger at the Harvard Business Review.

Taylor also says Apple's corporate culture -- which is based around Jobs' charisma -- is out of date.

"Jobs, for all of his virtues, clings to the Great Man Theory of Leadership -- a CEO-centric model of executive power that is outmoded, unsustainable, and, for most of us mere mortals, ineffective in a world of nonstop change," he writes.

The Silicon Alley Insider further blasts Apple for its silence on Jobs' health. The blog also says it's unclear exactly when Jobs will return to work.

"Apple continues to maintain its ludicrous stance that Steve's health and future role at the company is just a private matter -- not a major question and concern for investors, customers, and employees," the blog says.

"In reality, it is both: A private matter AND material corporate information. And Apple needs to climb out of its reality distortion field and start treating it that way."

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Apple 2.0
Mac news from outside the
reality distortion field

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Morgan Stanley: Mac Shipments on the Rise

07.10.09
Philip Elmer-DeWitt

According to Morgan Stanley's Kathryn Huberty, Apple (AAPL) is the computer maker with the "most upside" as the PC market begins to stabilize after the dismal first quarter of 2009.

There's some good news for Hewlett Packard (HPQ) and Dell (DELL) in the report to clients Huberty issued overnight Wednesday, but it's mostly attributed to enterprise cycles and inventory restocking.

Apple, however, is a different story.

"Even before the new Macbook Pros launched," she writes, "Apple began to outperform the broader commercial PC segment — with commercial Mac shipments up 25% [month over month] in May versus market growth of just 1%."

The fact that the new laptops arrived in early June means that they will provide what Huberty calls "a catalyst for growth" in both the June and September fiscal quarters. She points to NPD weekly shipment data showing steady acceleration of Mac shipments over the past few weeks. "Lastly," she concludes, "suppliers have recently noted Mac unit upside in the quarter."

Huberty is raising her forecast for Mac sales in the second calendar quarter (Apple's fiscal Q3) to 2.5 million units, up from 2.4 million. That would represent 12% quarter to quarter growth — less than Apple's 14% average over the past three years, but a lot better than the 4% QtoQ decline last quarter.

For the fiscal quarter than ended Saturday, she expects Apple to report earnings of $1.16 a share on PC revenue (i.e., not including iPhones, iPods, etc.) of $3.072 billion, up a point or two from her previous estimates.

Huberty has not always been so bullish on the Mac. In fact, one of her reports last September helped trigger the sharpest one-day fall in Apple's share price in eight years, one that wiped $18 billion off the company's market cap in the space of 60 minutes.

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Methods for Shutting Down or Restarting Your Mac

This may sound like a rather trivial issue, but shutting down or restarting your Mac can be a problem at times. Knowing various ways to shut down or restart your Mac can help prevent you from having to take drastic measures in the event of software hangs and crashes.

Every now and then OS X will hang on a process, or experience some other behavior that prevents the system from functioning properly. When this happens, usually a restart can clear the problem if you have no other way of tackling the hang directly.

There are several ways to shut down or restart your system, some of which are better in some circumstances than others, depending on the state of your system.

The Apple menu

Use of the Apple menu is the standard way to shut down a Mac running OS X. The use of this function closes applications safely, providing pauses in the shutdown process while documents are closed. In most occasions this will work to shut down or restart the system, but every now and then the system menus will not respond, leaving this option unavailable.

The shutdown window

The shutdown window is invoked by pressing the power button on older Macs' keyboards, but can be done on newer Macs by pressing **Control-Eject** or pressing the power button once (for laptops). From here, you can click the options to sleep, shutdown, or restart your Mac. These invoked shutdown and restart commands perform similarly to the ones from the Apple menu, resulting in the same shutdown and restart behaviors that pause for processes to quit properly before continuing with the shutdown.

Hot keys

In addition to the shutdown menu hot key, there are some additional "Control-Eject" based hot keys that can be used to immediately restart or shutdown the computer without first using the menu:

TarMac Tips

**Command-Control-Eject (restart)
Command-Option-Control-Eject (shut down)**

The Terminal

A more raw option for shutting down the computer is to use commands in the Terminal. The various options are the following:

> **Shutdown commands:**
> **shutdown -h now**
> **halt**
> **halt -q**
>
> **Reboot commands:**
> **shutdown -r now**
> **reboot**
> **reboot -q**

These commands will send termination and halt signals to running processes, and then power off or reset the hardware. This is a more crude approach to halting the system because it does not give running processes the time to quit normally and save settings or unsaved documents. Most processes are built to handle this kind of force-quitting, but it can be hard on the system if done repeatedly. The "-q" flag for the halt and reboot commands offer an even more crude way of shutting down the system, by preventing logging of the shutdown event and processes are quit as quickly and ungracefully as possible.

The Terminal part 2: Remote log-in

Many times people will find their whole system seems to be hung up and not responding. They cannot click any elements on the screen, or open any programs (including the Terminal). This prevents them from running any sort of shutdown commands that may prevent the use of a hard reset. To use remote log-in, you will need to enable it in the "Sharing" system preferences and make note of the computer's IP address. Then from another computer on the same network, run the following command in the terminal to log in to your computer:

> **ssh username@ip_address**

This will start a remote log-in session after you enter your password at the prompt,

and will let you run commands on your system as if you were running the Terminal application locally. From here, you can issue the "shutdown", "halt", and "reboot" commands when the system's interface is frozen. This usually will be successful at rebooting the system.

The last resort

If nothing works (such as you cannot log-in remotely and nothing is responding on the screen), then the last resort is to hard-reset the system. This is done by holding the power button down until the system shuts off, which should take only a few seconds. There are a couple of precautions that should be observed when doing a hard reset, which are:

1. Only do it when the hard drive is not being accessed.

If the hard drive is being accessed and you power off the system, you can damage the heads or platters. As a result, press your ear against the computer and if you hear the drive chattering and reading then do not power off the system. Wait until the drive stops making noises before you hard-reset the system. Granted sometimes this is not possible, but it should be attempted.

2. Check system for errors.

After performing the hard-reset, immediately boot up into safe mode and run diagnostics to ensure the system is functioning normally. Hold the "Shift" key at startup to get into Safe mode, which will run disk checks and other maintenance scripts. Then use Disk Utility to check the hard drive for errors and run a permissions fix. These are usually all that's required to check the system, but if you have other utility programs you might run them as well.

Finally, there are rare occasions where the system management controller or other low-level hardware is malfunctioning and the power button will not work to reset the computer. In these instances, you will need to cut power to the system by physically unplugging it (for laptops, remove the battery first and then unplug the power supply). It's the type of thing that makes computer technicians cringe, but is sometimes the only option. Be sure the hard drive is silent before doing this, and before rebooting be sure to reset the

Shutting Down

system management controller, followed by a PRAM reset, and then booting into Safe mode and running system diagnostics.

To reset the System Management Controller, follow the instructions in these Apple knowledgebase articles:

- Portables: http://support.apple.com/kb/HT1411
- Mac Pro: http://support.apple.com/kb/HT1806
- Mac Mini and iMac: http://support.apple.com/kb/HT1543

After the SMC is reset, power on the system and hold the Option-Command-P-R keys all at once, allowing the computer to reset and chime a couple of times before releasing the keys and immediately pressing the Shift key to get the system to boot into Safe mode. From here, run diagnostics and reboot the system accordingly and hopefully everything is working as it should.

Reduce System Workload During Drive Cloning

by Rob Griffiths
Macworld.com

If part of your backup strategy includes cloning your Mac's hard drive using a tool such as SuperDuper or CarbonCopyCloner, you'll want to make sure that Spotlight isn't active on that drive before you start cloning to it.

By default, Spotlight indexes everything it finds, anywhere on your system—including on the hard drive you'll be using for your clone. If Spotlight is active while cloning, your machine will also have to work hard while cloning—all those newly-created files will be added to Spotlight's index. Another downside to leaving Spotlight active on your clone drive is that you'll get double matches for anything you then search for—one match on your Mac, and another on your clone drive.

While some of these apps may block Spotlight on their own, I always do it myself, just to be sure the drive has been removed from Spotlight. To disable Spotlight,

first connect the drive onto which you'll clone your Mac's hard drive. Assuming it's already been formatted and is ready to go, it will mount in the Finder. Then open up the Spotlight System Preferences panel. Click the Privacy tab, then click the plus sign, and select your to-be-cloned volume in the dialog that appears.

I'm not sure there's any speed to be gained by disabling Spotlight prior to cloning, but your CPU won't have to work as hard while cloning, and you won't get double matches when you finish. Speaking of finished, you might want to insure that the drive still appears on the Privacy tab after cloning—I've seen reports that sometimes cloned drives mysteriously vanish from the Privacy panel, though I haven't seen that myself.

Making the Most of Command-Tab

06.26.09
MacFixIt

One of the more useful computing hot keys in OS X is the Command-Tab application switcher. This brings up a graphical menu of the active applications and allows you to quickly switch between them. For the most part, people tend to just press

Command-Tab and then hit Tab until the desired application is selected, but there are a lot more options to this menu that may make workflow much easier.

Giving credit where credit is due, Microsoft first implemented Command-Tab (Alt-Tab) in Windows 1.0, but it has since found its way into Unix and Linux, the classic Mac OS via third-party extensions (though the classic Mac eventually had an applications menu), and numerous other operating systems.

OK, enough praising Microsoft. Apple's implementation of the Command-Tab hot key allows you to manage your open

applications quite readily, including hiding and quitting applications, as well as opening selected documents. Let's shoot through the options starting with the basics. Keep in mind that for all these options for the applications switcher, the "Command" key will always be held down, since lifting it up will activate the selected application.

Navigation:
Command-Tab
This activates the menu and switches through applications in order of when they were last accessed. The foremost application will be on the left, and repeatedly pressing the Tab key will go through each application you have open.

Command-~ or Command-Shift-Tab
This reverses the Command-Tab behavior and goes through the application list in the opposite order.

There are alternate ways to navigate through the applications in the menu, but they require two hands. You can use the arrow keys or mouse scroll button to move left and right through the list, and you can also use the page-up or Home keys to move to the beginning of the list, and the page-down or End keys to move to the end of the list.

Canceling:
When you activate the menu with Command-Tab, the foremost application will not be selected. Therefore if you decide you do not want to switch, you can either Tab through or back and ensure the desired application is highlighted, or you can use one of two hot keys:

Command-. (period)
This is the default universal "cancel" command in OS X, and will quit the applications menu without switching if you press it.

Command-Esc
The Escape key also invokes cancellation of the current task, which in the case of the applications menu will also prevent a switch from occurring if pressed.

Managing applications:
Hiding and quitting applications from the Command-Tab/~ menu is also possible. To do this, use the "Q" and "H" keys respectively to quit or hide the selected application in the menu. If there are

Command-Tab

unsaved changes in open documents, pressing Q will bring up the default save dialogue before quitting.

Opening documents:

Like the Dock, the application switcher menu supports drag-and-drop of files onto applications to send information to that application for opening in new documents. To use this feature, click and drag a file, and with the mouse still held down activate the menu with Command-Tab. Then drop the file onto the desired application. This is beneficial when you have the Dock minimized, and also if you are working with one application. This also works with dragging text and Web links. Highlight text and start dragging it as an object, and then activate the application switcher and drop the text onto the desired application to open a new document with that information in it. Each application will treat files differently, so the utility of this feature will take some experimentation.

Beyond Command-Tab:

OS X supports a couple of other ways to switch between applications. The obvious one is to either click the active application in the Dock or select one of its windows, but a more flashy option is to use Expose to display all available application windows and choose from among them. This is a more workflow-based approach to switching, and will not work if the application does not have any standard windows open, but beyond these limitations it can be a quicker way to select the desired application to use.

Fix for Slow-responding Taps on an iPhone 3GS

When I got my iPhone 3GS, I played with all the new features, like everyone else. Then they wore off and I was back to normal use. While playing games, specifically Wild West Pinball, it seemed like all the taps weren't registering

properly. Also, when I pressed both flippers at the same time, there was a slight delay.

I thought this was a glitch in the game. But as I used more multi-touch games, it seemed something was wrong with my phone. Before resorting to complaining to Apple, I thought of what could be different from using my old iPhone. Of course, I had turned on the Zoom feature (in the Accessibility section of General Preferences) for no reason other that it was cool that I could do it.

When I turned off the Zoom feature, the taps went back to normal and the multi-touch taps respond quickly again.

High Tech Healthcare Tools Turn Apple iPhones into Lifelines

"The promise of telemedicine has been around for years, with robotic surgeries, remote monitoring of patients and big city doctors able to care for rural patients over computer networks," Jim Goldman reports for CNBC.

"But not until a new company called Airstrip came along, have we seen the true promise and convenience of what telemedicine can really be. Not on an emergency, expensive basis, but in a day-to-day, real-world kind of way," Goldman reports.

"Airstrip is gaining so much momentum that the company's software was featured at the recent Apple Worldwide Developers' Conference in San Francisco, and the app was met with rave reviews," Goldman report.

"Though probably no one is more excited about the new software than Manpreet Kaur, 32 weeks into her high risk pregnancy, strapped to a Silicon Valley hospital bed where a fetal monitor and other equipment keep a close, high tech eye on everything happening to her," Goldman reports. "At the same time, her doctor can monitor everything that equipment sees, in real time, no matter where he is, or how far away from the hospital he might be, thanks to the Airstrip software."

Goldman reports, "The program, one of the more than 50,000 applications now available on the Apple App Store, streams the data right to his iPhone where he sees precisely what the nurses see, as they see it, bedside, in Manpreet's hospital room."

"Patient Manpreet Kaur doesn't really care how she connects with her doctor, only that he's always there, and thanks to this technology, always "here," virtually in her hospital room. 'It is just like worry-free,' she says," Goldman reports. "Worry-free, thanks to a new kind of bedside manner for doctors, turning their iPhones into life-lines."

TarMac
Tidewater Area Macintosh User Group