So many new technologies have made an impact this year—some of them brand new, many of them gestating and now ready to hatch. More than half of these new technologies are for mobile platforms and are part of overall advances on the Web as well. Here are 10 technologies that will define 2010, the year of the mobile.

1. **The Tablet:** It was the most anticipated product of the year—the mythical tablet computer. There are beautiful Android tablets, Windows tablets, and, of course, the one tablet that could define the category, the Apple iPad. Why do we need yet another computer sized between a laptop and an iPhone? We won’t really know until we have it. But the answer lies here: More and more, we are finding that the web is all we need. As all of our apps and data move to the web, the tablet is the incarnation of the Web in device form, stripped down to its essentials. It will also be a superior e-reader for digital journals and newspapers, and, in forthcoming releases, will likely tie into your practice management system.

2. **Geo:** The combination of GPS chips in mobile phones, social networks, and increasingly innovative mobile apps means that geolocation is increasingly becoming a necessary feature for any killer app. We are not just talking about social broadcasting apps like Foursquare and Gowalla. The advent of Geo APIs will allow physicians and clinical staff to better navigate the many educational conferences to find the applicable presentations. Conference centers will provide location information that your device can decode and it will direct you to the right room or conference hall, as well as estimate your travel time to it.

3. **Real-Time Search:** After licensing real-time data streams from Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, and others, Google and Bing are quickly ramping up their real-time search functions. But real-time search is still treated as a silo and does not regularly surface in the main search results page. As we move forward toward full EHR implementation, vendors will be integrating this technology into their practice management systems.

4. **Chrome Operating System (OS):** The Chrome OS is Google’s most direct attack on Windows, with an operating system built from the ground up to run web apps fast and furious. Already Google is rumored to be working on a Chrome Netbook that will show the world what is possible with a “Web OS.” Don’t let this distract you from the proven operating system that you are already using. Not every bell or whistle is applicable to the medical practice.

5. **HTML5:** The Web is built on HTML (Hypertext Markup Language), and its next iteration is HTML5. Already browsers such as Firefox and Google’s Chrome (the browser, not the OS) are HTML5-friendly. Once HTML5 becomes more widespread across the web, it will reduce the need for Flash or Silverlight plug-ins to view videos, animations, or other rich applications. They will all be web-native. HTML5 also supports offline data storage, drag-and-drop, and other features that can make web apps act more like desktop apps. A lot of HTML-based practice management systems will have this engine under the hood in 2011.

6. **Mobile Video:** With video cameras integrated into the latest BlackBerrys, iPhone 3GS, and other Web phones, live video streaming apps are becoming more commonplace—streaming both from phones and to them. As mobile data networks beef up their 3G bandwidth and even start to tiptoe into true broadband with 4G (which Verizon is heading toward with its next-generation LTE network), mobile video usage will take off.

7. **Augmented Reality:** One of the coolest ways to use the camera lens on a mobile phone is with the increasing array of augmented reality apps. They add a layer of data to reality by placing everything from
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8. Mobile Transactions: As mobile phones become full-fledged computers, they can also be used for mobile commerce. One area poised to take off in 2010 includes mobile payments and transactions. Twitter founder Jack Dorsey’s latest start-up, Square, turns the iPhone into a credit card reader. Verifone has its competing product, as does Mophie. The idea is that any mobile phone can become a point of sale, and those mobile transactions can tie into back-end accounting, CRM, and other enterprise systems.

9. Android: Last year saw the launch of nearly two dozen Android-powered phones, including the Verizon Droid. Google’s Nexus One launched as the first Android phone, which can be unlocked from any given carrier (it is launching with T-Mobile). Android is Google’s answer to the iPhone, and as it reaches critical mass across multiple carriers and handsets, it is becoming increasingly attractive to developers. There are already more than 10,000 apps for Android; next year there will be even more. Other devices running on the mobile OS are launching as well.

10. Social Network-Based CRM: We’ve seen the rise of Twitter and Facebook as social communication tools. This year, those modes of real-time communication have found their way deeper into business enterprise. Salesforce.com, for example, is set to launch Chatter, its real-time stream of enterprise data that interfaces with Twitter and Facebook and turns them into business tools. If your practice is using social media, these connections could generate new business for your clinical or retail operations.

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