



Illustration by Eleeza Palmer

Obituary for my pager

For decades you were
A fixture at my side—
Compact, portable, trustworthy
With your double AA battery
I changed every couple of months.

Your 0 to 9 language was so simple
And everyone recognized your beeps.
No MRNs or names,
HIPAA compliant by nature,
Safe to lay down without worry.
Theft? Not likely, my friend.

Your analog frame aged gracefully
Until a phone app was created.
With promises of security and ease,
You passed from active service.

But unintended consequences multiplied—
Consults by text, not conversation,
The threshold to message so low
That I'm never unattached for long.
And my simple freedom to switch off? Gone.

A professional and personal barrier torn,
What information goes to whom?
"It's secure, don't worry," I'm told.
But my wellness? Zoom meetings for that.

Is your replacement better?
"Of course!" they proclaim,
"Don't you know how smart this phone is?"
So much for evidence-based conclusions.
Rest in peace, my old pager. I confess:
At your funeral I cried, alone.

—Satyan K. Shah, MD