

Of Cell Phones and Man

The 2013 meeting of the European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons was held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, a city boasting about 800,000 people and 880,000 bicycles.¹

Many factors have led to the development of this bike-friendly environment. Amsterdam is geographically small and flat, and the climate is mild by Northern European standards. The city also consists of a maze of canals and narrow streets that makes auto traffic largely impractical and public transportation slow. Just as our car-based culture has created a set of problems familiar to almost all North Americans, Amsterdam has its own set of bike-related issues. Near misses of both pedestrians and cars happen by the minute. People ride around with helmetless children in their laps, microwave ovens on their shoulders, and grocery bags hanging from their handlebars. They also engage in something I have never seen before—texting while biking.

This observation brings me to the subject of cell phones. As my flight home from Amsterdam neared departure, a fellow passenger became agitated. She and a flight attendant then began dismantling the passenger's seat, and a maintenance worker was summoned. It soon became clear that the passenger had misplaced her cell phone and thought that perhaps it had fallen into the depths of her seat. She also thought she could have left it in the airport and was debating whether or not to disembark and miss the flight. The flight attendant finally demanded that the passenger make a decision. Almost on cue, a man in the row behind her announced that he had found the phone. The distraught passenger exhibited a level of gratitude usually displayed by those who have



narrowly escaped injury or death. The rest of us were simply glad to see the plane reassembled and get on our way.

Mobile phones have changed us in ways that can only be fully appreciated by those who remember life before the devices. Then, plans to meet were set in stone. If you failed to appear at the appointed time, the meeting simply did not occur. Today, being without a cell phone can be liberating or terrifying, depending on the individual,

but too often, we cross the line from increased productivity to distraction. Multitasking can mean doing several tasks simultaneously and poorly. I am as guilty of this as anyone.

Cell phones and other mobile devices certainly have their place. We increasingly use them to access the Web. After Google, the world's second most commonly visited website is Facebook,² and in 2013, mobile users surpassed desktop users of Facebook for the first time.³ A revolution is occurring in how we access information, hear news, and receive

updates in our areas of interest. Last summer saw the launch of *Millennial Eye*, an all-digital, mobile, app-based periodical featuring next-generation leaders in ophthalmology. You will not find this publication lying on your desk, because *ME* only exists digitally. Although nearly all ophthalmic periodicals, including *Cataract & Refractive Surgery Today*, have an online presence, *ME* is specifically designed to be accessed on a mobile device. I encourage you to install the *ME* app, but if you must, you can access the publication online from any computer. Inside, you will find current, rich content, all optimized for mobile viewing. I hope you also enjoy this edition of *CRST*, which has the distinct advantage of being accessible after the aircraft's cabin door has closed. ■

Steven J. Dell, MD
Chief Medical Editor

1. Tagliabue J. The Dutch prize their pedal power, but a sea of bikes swamps their capital. *Amsterdam Journal*. June 20, 2103. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/21/world/europe/a-sea-of-bikes-swamps-amsterdam-a-city-fond-of-pedaling.html?src=me&ref=general&_r=1&_t=1&_u=1&_v=1&_w=1&_x=1&_y=1. Accessed October 17, 2013.

2. Top 15 most popular websites October 2013. The eBusiness Knowledgebase website. <http://www.ebizmba.com/articles/most-popular-websites>. Accessed October 17, 2013.

3. Kelly H. Facebook mobile users surpass desktop users for first time. *CNN website*. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/30/tech/social-media/facebook-mobile-users/index.html>. Updated January 31, 2013. Accessed October 17, 2013.