



## THE PELIKAN CHALLENGE

I had a fascinating on-site briefing with the folks at [Pelikan Sun](#) in Palo Alto on Tuesday. That's the company that makes the current "gold standard" in lancing -- the world's only electronic and completely painless [finger-pricking device](#) (really, *it is*).

The three founders are veterans of Hewlett-Packard/[Agilent](#) Labs, and have spent 10 years refining the technology they acquired from that company. What they've come up with is essentially a little "mini-computer" that has "micro-control" over the depth and velocity of the lancing process. Yada, yada, yada. I don't want to bore you with the technological details. Instead, I want to tell you about the twofold challenge that came out of my visit.



(that's their fingerprinted front door)

First, I learned about the company's big **PR challenge**:

"This is the kind of device that can be life-changing, but you really have to touch it, feel it, try it, to 'get it.' We can't just go out saying 'it's painless, it's painless' because people have heard all that before," says marketing director Lisa Rogan.

The device, launched in November 2007, is already a big hit among children with Type 1 and their parents who've had a chance to test it in person at an expo or camp. But it's \$200 out-of-pocket for the box itself, and another \$15 for every 100 finger pricks (50 non-reusable lancets per disk). "There's no insurance code for an electronic lancing device, so no coverage," Rogan notes, although the disks carrying the needles do qualify as regular supplies.

Reprinted with permission from Amy Tenderich of DiabetesMine.com

It's difficult to make the argument that people should shell out this kind of money for a *lancing device* -- something that doesn't actually change your glucose control in any way -- or that they should carry around yet another bulky D-device, in this case at a somewhat chunky 4 x 2.5 x 1 inches.



We had a long talk about all the ecstatic parents who say their kids and teens are so much happier testing with the Pelikan, and therefore get better control with a lot less family stress. I believe it. I believe there are also many newly diagnosed adults, both Type 1 and Type 2, who would test much more regularly if it were just this comfortable to do.

But how to get the word out? Again, you really have to try this thing to become a believer. And that's kind of what happened to me.

Challenge No. 2: **One Month to Better "[Finger Health](#)"?**

We all had a close look at my fingertips. I was kind of embarrassed to discover how pocked and calloused they are, after just four years of this stuff.



As First Appeared on DiabetesMine.com™ 2008

**Reprinted with permission from Amy Tenderich of DiabetesMine.com**

Would I be willing to try the Pelikan Sun for three to four weeks on one hand, while using my regular (thumbtack-like) lancet on the other hand to gauge the difference bruises, scars and calluses? You betcha!

Essentially they're asking me to help with Challenge No. 1, above, but why not? I'm always up for an honest review of an honest product.

And truly, I'd like to get rid of those little black spots where the blood is trapped under thickening skin. I'd like to gain "overall improved finger sensation" so I don't have to keep cranking my lancing device up to top velocity and then jabbing myself over and over just to draw blood. And then practically needing a tourniquet to stop the flow.

And so I embark on my pain-free lancing journey. Not that the pain itself ever really bothered me. But I am more than willing to do without it, and save my wretched fingers at the same time. So I'm now officially packing the "gold box" with me wherever I go. I chose my right hand, the one in worst shape, to test the Pelikan Sun's soft touch. Wish me luck.

If you're interested in testing the Pelikan, here's a short list of [some events](#) the company will be attending. They're also working hard on getting units out to CDEs across the country so patients can try this thing right where they live.

April 03, 2008 |



## Gentle Pelikan: My Finger Health Challenge Results

OK, so the month of April is coming to a close and it's time for a close inspection of my so-oft-tested fingertips. If you'll recall, I began evaluating the ground-breaking new [Pelikan Sun electronic lancing device](#) on April 1 and promised to make a month of it.

Let's start where all good reviews should begin, by explaining the methodology: in this case, utterly unscientific. I simply vowed to use the Pelikan only on my right hand for a month, while continuing to use my regular spring-loaded lancet on the left. Of course there was no exact 1:1 ratio on the number of times I tested each hand, but I can tell you that I preferred to use the Pelikan when I was at home, while mostly using the older model while I was out and about, so that hopefully leveled the playing field somewhat.

### The Usability/ Experience

So what did it feel like? Did I run into problems? Was it convenient to use, or a pain in the @#\$% (not finger)?

For me, this product gets a 9 out of 10 on the "feel good" scale. I've never enjoyed (or least disliked) taking my glucose readings than I did having a gadget that keeps you from feeling anything at all. In fact, all I noticed was a quick "brushing" sensation on my fingertip.

Just as with so many other new-fangled diabetes gadgets these days, I did run into some technical difficulties. The first unit I had (which comes in nice, [minimal packaging](#), btw) continually gave me error messages, causing me to waste almost a whole cartridge of lancet needles. But the company was super-responsive and replaced that first "lemon" with a fully functional unit right away.



The Pelikan couldn't be easier to use (unlike the [MultiClix](#), for example, which I sometimes found difficult to advance). It only has three buttons, and two of them are just the up-and-down arrows to adjust lancing depth. I found that I did have to increase the depth a bit over time to get it right -- if you don't draw blood, you've wasted a notch on your cartridge (once it's advanced, there's no going back).

**Reprinted with permission from Amy Tenderich of DiabetesMine.com**

I'm up to 1.3 on the depth scale, yet my fingers are happy. I'm not posting hand photos again because those [little black dots](#) have faded on BOTH hands, probably due to more careful lancing on the sides of fingers, rather than on the "pads." But the fingers on my right hand (Pelikan hand) do feel softer and less calloused, no doubt.

The Pelikan is sometimes inconvenient to carry, because of its size, but it's kind of addictive: the more you use it, the more you want to (see below).

### **The Usefulness/ Efficacy**

So did the Pelikan perform it's medical function well? Well enough to warrant the inconvenience and the cost?

I found that I was excited about using it, and still am after a month of obligatory use. In fact, I feel very disappointed anytime I'm in a place where I don't have access to it, and have to use my old "thumbtack" lancet instead. So I test more often, and with more enthusiasm -- which I firmly believe is good for my diabetes care (despite [recent headlines](#)).

Yes, it still gives me an occasional error message, but what product doesn't? There were only a few times when my hands got so cold that I had to do a repeat stick, thereby wasting some notches on the \$15 cartridge.

I guess what I'm saying is: this thing works well and is totally worth the money if you 1) really hate the sensation of traditional lancing, or 2) are caring for a child with diabetes. I can't imagine any kid who wouldn't be jumping for joy over a switch to the Pelikan.

Yes, \$200 upfront plus supplies is quite an investment, but think for a moment about how easily that money might be frittered away on something entirely non-essential. I find that it's true what they say: people tend to spend money on [what they want](#), not what they need.

In the final analysis, here's how I really feel: I'm excited that my Pelikan Challenge Month is over, because now I am finally free to use it on *both* hands.

April 29, 2008 |