

3-D avatar may help doctors improve care

IBM scientists have created software that allows physicians to use an avatar to obtain medical data in the same manner in which they interact with patients.

The prototype technology, created at IBM's Zurich, Switzerland, research center, uses an avatar -- a 3-D representation of the human body -- to allow physicians to visualize patient medical records in an entirely new way.

Called the Anatomic and Symbolic Mapper Engine, ASME allows a doctor to click with a computer mouse on a particular part of the avatar's body to trigger a search of medical records to retrieve relevant information.

"It's like Google Earth for the body," said IBM Researcher Andre Elisseeff, who led the project. "In hopes of speeding the move toward electronic healthcare records, we've tried to make information easily accessible for healthcare providers by combining medical data with visual representation, making it as simple as possible to interact with data that can improve patient care."

IBM said its researchers are now exploring integrating speech technology into ASME.

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