

Biotechnology cuts waiting room time

New biometric technology has been installed at the University of Manitoba in Canada, allowing orthodontics patients to "sign in" with their fingerprints.

The orthodontic clinic's patients no longer have to speak with a receptionist; they simply touch a fingerprint keypad at the front desk. That sends a message directly to a computer at an orthodontic resident's work station, noting the patient is waiting.

Upgrades to the clinic this summer have equipped each orthodontic resident's dental station with a chair-side computer to receive the biometric data sent when patients arrive.

"If a patient waits for more than 15 minutes, the computer will flag that the patient has been waiting a long time," said Dr. Billy Wiltshire, head of orthodontics.

A patient management system, in addition to the fingerprint sign-in, will enable orthodontic residents to access virtual dental records without having to refer to traditional paper charts. The technology will also eventually include access to digital dental x-rays.

The fingerprint sign-in is expected to shorten waiting time for the nearly 1,000 patients that visit the University of Manitoba orthodontics clinic every year.

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