

UPCOMING MEETING COVERAGE

American College of Psychiatrists
 National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers
 American Neuropsychiatric Association
 University of Arizona Psychopharmacology Review
 American Academy of Pain Medicine

We Are There For You

Facial Photo Capture Could Prevent Errors

BY TODD ZWILLICH
 Contributing Writer

WASHINGTON — Electronic bar codes and radiofrequency microchips are all the rage in medical error prevention, but one research team thinks avoiding mistakes may be as easy as snapping a photo.

Researchers with the MedStar Health

network here are experimenting with facial-capture software that they say could quickly and inexpensively help busy nurses and physicians avoid mistakes.

The software can pick human faces out of any photo image in less than a second. It's tied into a \$120 Web camera mounted behind the nurse's triage desk, and anyone who approaches the desk automatically has his or her face captured. Nurses can permanently tie a patient's face to the corresponding electronic health record with one click.

Nurses "don't have to pick up a camera, they don't have to make them say cheese, they don't have to put them in a special location. All they have to do is click on the patient's face," Dr. Michael Gillam, director of the Medical Media Lab at MedStar, said at the annual symposium of the American Medical Informatics Association.

MedStar researchers have already developed a state-of-the-art electronic health record system that allows doctors and nurses to view patients' full charts at a glance.

Developers say that the software could be used to attach the right face to any medication order, blood product, or device before it goes into a patient.

The system, which is known as Axyzzi, was snapped up by Microsoft Corp. in July.

Now Dr. Gillam's team is hoping that the

facial photo-capture system can help avoid errors by capitalizing on humans' natural penchant for recognizing faces.

"The problem with a bar code is that it's not human readable," Dr. Gillam said in an interview.

MedStar developers say their software could be used to attach the right face to any medication order, blood product, or device before it goes into a patient.

"Anyone can look and see that that blood doesn't match, because that's not the right person," Dr. Gillam said.

The Medical Media Lab tested the software prototype and found that it captured the smiling faces of all 22 racially diverse adults who approached a MedStar triage desk. But the system has yet to be put into practice to see if it really enhances patient safety.

Dr. Gillam said the automatic system could be especially useful in overwhelmed emergency departments. "Suddenly 30 patients show up ... at one time from a bus accident. You can imagine trying to take each picture," he said.

But as with most identity technology, privacy is a concern. After all, no one wants to have his or her face on permanent file simply for asking directions to the rest room. Dr. Gillam said that although the system would photograph all comers, images are quickly erased if nurses don't attach them to a medical record. ■

TOP SPECIALIST JOURNAL IN THE FIELD OF SCHIZOPHRENIA



SCHIZOPHRENIA RESEARCH

- **Largest journal in Schizophrenia with widest readership**
- **Impact factor of 3,889 in the Journal Citation Reports®**
published by Thomson Scientific 2005
- **Hugely improved publishing speed:**
 > 2 weeks until online publication
 > 11 weeks until print publication

Editors-in-Chief:

H.A. Nasrallah, M.D.
 University of Cincinnati Medical Center, Cincinnati, OH, USA

L.E. DeLisi, M.D.
 The Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research, Orangeburg, NY, USA

2006 Volumes 80-88 (27 issues)
 ISSN 0920-9964



Official journal of the Schizophrenia International Research Society (SIRS)

For more information on this journal:
www.elsevier.com/locate/schres

For direct access to the abstracts and/or full-text articles
www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/09209964

