

AVATAR CLINICIANS? TRY JAZZ FOR CHRISTMAS

Jazz is defined as a genre of music which originated during the late 19th and early 20th century. However in our case, the term Jazz is referring to a remote presence system for doctors, developed by the French company Gostai. In essence it may also be called an avatar system.

Jazz consists of a 3 foot robot possessing an articulated head mounted with an LCD screen, a docking station (for charging), as well as an Urbi open-source cross-platform software platform in C++. According to French surgeon Dr Alain Herard, Jazz has greatly facilitated his life. Like all surgeons, he needs to carry out operations, visit his patients and do the paperwork. Whilst Dr Herard is in his office carrying out his paperwork, he wears an over-the-head wireless headset and stands in front of a computer camera which is connected to Jazz through Wifi. On the other hand, Jazz visits his patients. Since the robot is fitted with camera, speakers and microphones, Dr Herard sees what Jazz sees, hears what Jazz hears and talks through Jazz to his patients via the speaker. More importantly, the patient gets to actually see the doctor through the 5 inch LCD screen and speak to him through the microphone.

One of the most distinguishing features of Jazz is the web-based remote control interface. The robot is driven by clicking with the mouse on the video feed. If one is driving the robot and the video shows a long corridor, one simply click at the end of the corridor and the robot will go there. In addition, since it possesses a built-in infrared camera and telemetric laser system, this €9000 robot can map its own surroundings and eventually patrol buildings fully autonomously.



Such technology may be the linchpin in the provision of medical care in remote rural areas of large countries, which may be disadvantaged because of the long travelling distances needed to access medical care. However, the use of this technology also has its relevance locally. Using an avatar system, visiting consultants who operate at Mater Dei hospital may 'visit' patients before actually arriving in Malta. Furthermore, imagine that at 2am a Consultant receives a phone call from a Resident Specialist at Mater Dei hospital, requesting his presence because of an emergency. As long as there is a computer connected to the internet, the Consultant can instantly be 'present' at the hospital through Jazz and interact with patients and medical staff. ❄️

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