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SOAPware Aids Medical Field

By J.R. Ledford

10/23/2006

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Step inside Oates' clinic in Fayetteville, and you will find a very relaxed atmosphere. He designed the building himself, but one thing patients won't find is paperwork.

"Eighty percent of my patients do 80 percent of the charting themselves using interactive software that asks questions in a very straight forward, simple way," Oates said.

His office has a computer room where patients answer questions related to their health.

"It really is more than the clipboard stuff," Oates said. "It's the history of what is the issue that brought them in, and branching questions based on that."

Doctors often take pride in their interviewing abilities and discovering the patient's issue, but, Oates said, many doctors don't realize that patients don't value the 20-question routine. Patients want to know what is wrong and know what the course of treatment will be.

"They spend 80 percent of the face-to-face time doing the 20 questions, and only 20 percent really dealing with, 'Where do we go from here?'" he said. "We need to reverse that, and that's what the technology does."

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