

Medicine Meets VR

Catching the next wave of health care.

The media hype often presents virtual reality as some kind of fancy-schmantzy videogame enhancement, but the physicians and engineers who attend Medicine Meets Virtual Reality tend to be more intrigued by VR's practical applications. According to the practitioners who trek to San Diego for this confab, telemedicine and other virtual care technologies will both improve access to medical care and reduce the high costs associated with traditional treatments.

Sponsored by UC San Diego's School of Medicine, this international meeting typically attracts top-notch physicians as well as VR luminaries like Jaron Lanier and James Burke. As virtual reality expands into the doctor's office, more practitioners will be able to treat patients with minimally invasive procedures, such as mock surgeries or remote examinations.

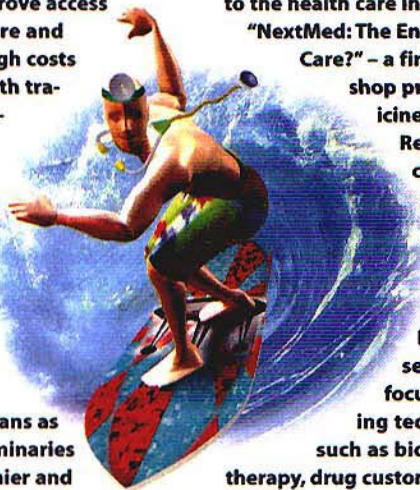
One focus of this year's gathering is VR applications designed to control common phobias. Program

adviser Brenda Weiderhold of the California School of Professional Psychology will present research that shows the effectiveness of relying on immersion techniques to treat everything from the fear of flying to being scared of spiders. Also, Faina Shtern of the US Office on Women's Health will discuss technology transfers from defense and space applications to the health care industry.

"NextMed: The End of Health Care?" – a first-time workshop preceding Medicine Meets Virtual Reality – will complement Shtern's and Weiderhold's dissection of modern medicine. NextMed sessions will focus on emerging technologies such as bionics, gene therapy, drug customization, and microbotic surgery.

Together, Medicine Meets Virtual Reality and NextMed will reveal – literally – the bleeding edge of medical technology.

Registration: US\$540 through December 1, \$630 after. Contact: +1 (619) 751 8841, fax +1 (619) 751 8842, email mmvr@amainc.com, on the Web at www.amainc.com/MMVR/MMVR.html.



The Current Roundup (see Wired 5.10)

November 8-9 Animation: An Exploration of Japanese Anime; Banff, Canada. • **November 13-15** Bionomics: Living with Perpetual Evolution; San Francisco. • **November 20-21** Online Games '97; Los Angeles. • **November 27-29** The Virtual Campus: Trends for Higher Education and Training; Madrid. • **December 3-6** Living Surfaces: Toward Digital Literacy; Chicago. • **December 4-5** The Impact of the Internet on Communications Policy; Cambridge, Massachusetts.

December 8-11 Usenix Symposium on Internet Technologies and Systems; Monterey, California Slow connection speeds, the lack of relevant information, and compromised security are issues the typical Internet user faces every day. The speakers at this workshop, such as UUNET senior vice president Heidi Heiden, will explore the myriad strains on today's information networks. Other experts will discuss the problems created by increased traffic and offer possible solutions, including next-generation information indexing and more reliable cryptography. Registration: US\$425. Contact: +1 (714) 588 8649, email conference@usenix.org, on the Web at www.usenix.org/events/wits97/.

December 10-14 Computer Support for Collaborative Learning '97; Toronto Distance learning, cooperative composition, and MUDs all hold promise for use in the classrooms of tomorrow. This international pedagogical gathering invites designers, teachers, researchers, and students to speculate on the future of education. Proponents of collaborative education think emerging communications technologies will encourage students to share in the learning process. Registration: not available at press time. Contact: on the Web at www.oise.utoronto.ca/cscl/.

January 5-11 Unconventional Models of Computation; Auckland, New Zealand Today's PCs and supercomputers use the Turing or von Neumann model of computation, but other architectures are needed to process the terabytes of data engendered by more complex problems and models. MIT mechanical engineering professor Ian Hunter and chaos theorist Ilya Prigogine will discuss these alternatives. While quantum and molecular computing continue to be the most popular topics, one-third of all presentations will cover newer models, such as fractal computing and neural networks. Registration: NZ\$500 (approximately US\$70). Contact: +64 (9) 373 7599 ext. 7868, email mjd@cs.auckland.ac.nz, on the Web at www.cs.auckland.ac.nz/CDMTCS/docs/umc98.html.

January 16-23 Slamdance International Film Festival '98; Park City, Utah Having been shunned by the Sundance Film Festival three years ago, cinéastes Jon Fitzgerald, Shane Kuhn, and Dan Mirvish launched this alternative independent film forum. Held concurrently with its glitzy Park City predecessor, Slamdance pledges to recognize underfunded new filmmakers. This year's

selections promise to showcase even more digitally produced cinema. Registration: US\$350. Contact: +1 (310) 204 7977, email slamdance@earthlink.net, on the Web at www.slamdance.com/.

January 28-31 Medicine Meets Virtual Reality: 6 – Art, Science, Technology; Healthcare (R)Evolution; San Diego See information at left.

The Usual Suspects

December 9-11 Comdex/Miami '97; Miami Beach, Florida. Contact: email register@comdex.com, on the Web at www.comdex.com/. **January 8-11** Winter CES; Las Vegas. Contact: +1 (703) 907 7600, email cesinfo@eia.org, on the Web at www.cemacity.org/ces/winter/.

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Calling San Diego Home

During World War II, GIs on their way to the Pacific passed through San Diego and became so enamored with the region's tranquil winters and sunny strands that many later decided to call it home. Today, the city still feeds the need for endless summer but also provides an abundance of culinary riches.

Health care professionals will appreciate the cal-

orie-conscious delights at California Cuisine. If, on the other hand, decadence is what you crave after an intense day of lectures, the Old World charm of downtown's Olé Madrid could be just what the doctor ordered. Feast on the tapas, but to steer clear of digestive trauma, wait at least 30 minutes before racing to the spacious dance floor.

If sangria doesn't quite quench your thirst for nightlife, cab over to ever-raucous Rich's. This cavernous danceterium hosts the craziest parties in San Diego, and beckons a dressed-to-impress crowd.

By California law, boozing stops at 2 a.m., but night owls will find refuge at Cafe Lulu, which serves up sobering coffee into the wee hours.