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I hereby certify that this paper or fee is being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450.

By: _____
Name: Jenifer Weck

REQUEST FOR PROVISIONAL APPLICATION UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.53(c)

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

This is a request for filing a Provisional application for patent under 37 CFR § 1.53(c) entitled INTERNET SYSTEM FOR CONNECTING DOCTORS AND PATIENTS by the following inventor(s):

Full Name Of Inventor	**Family Name** Hicks	**First Given Name** David	**Second Given Name**
Residence & Citizenship	**City** Denver	**State or Foreign Country** Colorado	**Country of Citizenship** USA
Post Office Address	**Post Office Address** 601 University Blvd.	**City** Denver	**State & Zip Code/Country** Colorado 80209/USA

1. ☒ Enclosed is the Provisional application for patent as follows: 13 pages of specification, and 4 sheets of drawings.

2. ☐ Small entity status is claimed pursuant to 37 CFR 1.27.

3. ☒ Payment of Provisional filing fee under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16(d):
   - ☒ Attached is a check in the amount of $200.00.
   - ☐ Please charge Deposit Account No. 13-2725.
   - ☐ PAYMENT OF THE FILING FEE IS BEING DEFERRED.

4. ☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees as set forth in 37 CFR §§ 1.16 to 1.18 which may be required by this paper or credit any overpayment to Account No. 13-2725.

5. ☐ Enclosed is an Assignment of the invention to , Recordation Form Cover Sheet and a check for $ to cover the Recordation Fee.

6. ☐ Also Enclosed:

7. ☐ The invention was made by the following agency of the United States Government or under a contract with the following agency of the United States Government:

Defendant's Exhibit 2

8. ☒ Address all future communications to the **Attention of Timothy B. Scull** (may only be completed by attorney or agent of record) at the address below.

9. ☒ A return postcard is enclosed.

Respectfully submitted,

23552
PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

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Date: 2/8/06

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INTERNET SYSTEM FOR CONNECTING DOCTORS AND PATIENTS

Technical Field

This invention generally relates to an Internet-based system and method that connects patients with potential doctors and vice versa and, more particularly, to providing levels of verification, including a doctor-, independent-, and patient-verified portion of a web-furnished report.

Background

It is vital to potential patients to be able to gain as much information as possible about a particular physician, or doctor, before selecting that physician as a primary care doctor or specialist. The Internet has become a great source of information to consumers in general. Indeed, consumers rely heavily on the Internet for sources of information and data. However, one well-recognized problem with the Internet is that the consumer often cannot determine the veracity of the information which is revealed through a search. Further, there are few, if any resources available for patients to discover information about physicians. Typically, information about doctors on the Internet is provided by the physicians themselves and may not be updated on a regular basis or may contain inaccurate or incomplete information. Further, even if such information is available, it is usually not organized in a manner that would allow a patient to compare doctors, search for a particular doctor by geographic area, or verify a doctor's certifications. Also, the information available to a potential patient typically does not include comments or ratings by other patients or consumers. Such information would likely be useful to a potential patient who would gain knowledge of another's first-hand experience with a particular doctor.

It is with respect to these and other considerations that the present invention has been made.

Summary of the Invention

In general, the present invention is related to providing an Internet-based business that drives patients to potential physicians, or doctors, and, similarly, provides doctors with the types of patients they desire. In an embodiment, the present invention involves a large database of doctor-related information, where each doctor has the ability to, for a fee, manage his or her specific data. Regardless, each doctor's "report" provides different levels of verified information about the doctor, such as the name of his/her medical school, graduation date, board certifications, internships, fellowships, publications, state or federal reprimands, suspensions, or license revocations, and information interpreting this data for a potential patient.

In essence, the report has at least three portions. First, there is a doctor-verified, or doctor-provided, section. This portion allows the doctor to put whatever information he or she feels will help a patient choose him or her as a physician. This information may include age, hobbies, awards, etc. In one embodiment, the doctor may provide a link so the patient can make an appointment on-line and view further information regarding the doctor's backgrounds, qualifications, and location, among other information. The second portion relates to a company-verified section. In other words, the company managing the database and providing this web-based service verifies the doctor-specific information, such as school attendance, board certifications and other items of note. The company would thus spend considerable time and resources in verifying this information. Given the "independent" verification of this portion, patients tend to trust it more than if it were the doctor's own "advertising." Lastly, there is a patient-verified portion, i.e., a place where patients can rate or comment on personal, past

experiences with the particular doctor. In one embodiment, other physicians may also comment and/or rate the doctor.

The present invention's Internet-based business and website further relates to how this information may be accessed by users. In response to a search, the website will provide the user a list of doctors that meet the search criteria. Generally, in order to read the reports for each doctor however, the user will be prompted to pay a fee. Typically, subsequent reports may be cheaper once the user purchases the first one. However, if a doctor has signed up with our client, then the doctor can pay an upfront fee so that his or her report will be free to any user. Thus, the users/patients are presented a list of doctors wherein some have free reports and others must be purchased. Consequently, users are driven to the doctors with the free reports.

As may be appreciated, this well-designed database may be searched by potential patients and given how user-friendly the site is, patients generally find the information they are looking for. That is, the site allows for searches based on geographic area, specialty and/or other criteria.

The architecture of the site allows for a high natural placement based on general Internet searches, such as those done using Google, Yahoo, and/or other search engines. As yet another aspect of the invention, groups of doctors may advertise and provide their own reports, which will help patients locate them as well.

The various embodiments of the present invention may be implemented as a computer process, a computing system or as an article of manufacture, such as a computer program product or computer-readable media. The computer program product may be a computer storage media readable by a computer system and encoding a computer program of instructions for executing a computer process. The computer program product may also be a propagated signal

on a carrier readable by a computing system and encoding a computer program of instructions for executing a computer process.

These and various other features, as well as advantages, which characterize the present invention, will be apparent from a reading of the following detailed description and a review of the associated drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 illustrates a logical representation of a network environment in which patients are provided web-based access through a patient user-interface to the database containing doctor profiles. Also shown is a generalized depiction of a report rendered on a typical webpage, showing the specific portions, or sections, of information available, including a doctor-provided information section, an independent certified, or verified, information section, and a patient-provided information portion.

FIG. 2 depicts an exemplary computing system upon which embodiments of the present invention may be implemented.

FIG. 3 is a flow diagram illustrating operational characteristics of a process for a user-based search for doctor information.

FIG. 4 is a flow diagram illustrating operational characteristics of a process for developing a report of information regarding a particular doctor, including information regarding the doctor's biography, independent certification information, and patient comments/ratings.

Detailed Description

The present invention and its various embodiments are described in detail below with reference to the figures. When referring to the figures, like structures and elements shown throughout are indicated with like reference numerals. Objects depicted in the figures that are covered by another object, as well as the reference annotations thereto, are shown using dashed lines.

The present invention is generally directed to an Internet-based tool for providing information regarding doctors. An exemplary embodiment involves the maintenance of a database containing doctor information for the purpose of providing a webpage-based report containing such information specific to a particular doctor. Such information, includes, but is not limited to, doctor-provided information, such as a bio and other items of interest, certification information provided by an independent entity, and patient-provided information including comments and/or ratings. It should be appreciated that the embodiments described herein are also applicable to professionals other than doctors.

Based on this discussion of the general environment in which embodiments of the present invention are applicable, FIG. 1 illustrates, in block diagram form, a logical representation of a network environment for providing patients with web-based access to the system of the present invention. In an embodiment, the network environment 100 includes a client, or patient, computer 102, a communication network 106, a web server 104, a database 108 containing doctor profiles, or doctor-specific information and data, 110 and a webpage report of doctor information 112, including, but not limited to sections, including doctor-provided information 114, certification information 116, and patient-provided information 118. The network environment 100 is not limited to any particular implementation and instead embodies any computing environment upon which functionality of the environment may be practiced.

The physician information 114 may include the doctor's philosophy, the doctor's personal facts, such as sex, age, years in profession and/or whether he/she speaks any foreign languages. The information 114 may further include honors or awards the doctor has received, his/her professional appointments, affiliations or memberships, and the doctor's professional interests, if the doctor so desires. In essence, the doctor has the ability to craft some of the information provided to the patient. This may also include education information. This information may or may not be verified, but it is expected that the physician, at least, verifies this information.

The certification information 116 is preferably verified by an independent third party, such as by Health Grades. This information provides a potential patient with some assurance that the qualifications of the doctor have been checked by someone. Such certification information may also include such items as board certifications, medical schools, residency, fellowship information, intern information, etc. The certification information may also include performance information, such as number of procedures, dates, etc. Information 116 may also include any and/or all disciplinary actions to date.

Patient information 118 relates to patient verified information and preferably past patient verified information. This may further include national averages based on certain predetermined questions done through surveys. E.g., "Do you trust your doctor to make decisions in your best interest?" Or, "Would you recommend your doctor to family and friends?" By rating this information, the potential patient can view past performance of a particular doctor through past patient's eyes.

Other information that may be provided includes location of doctor, phone numbers, affiliated hospitals, health plans or other insurance information, grading for affiliated hospitals and/or health plans.

Additionally, in some embodiments, a link may be provided to allow the user to directly access an appointment module from the profile page 112. The user may set an appointment directly from the module.

As may be appreciated, the user may be prompted to pay a fee when accessing a profile, but the user may get a discount if more than one profile is accessed. Further, the user may, in some embodiments pay a flat fee for unlimited profiles. In yet other embodiments, the doctor's may reimburse (or make free) for viewing of their profiles.

Turning now to the exemplary computing system itself, FIG. 2 illustrates a computer system 200 that may represent one of the nodes, such as 102 shown in Fig. 1, which stores a partial view of the distributed network and disseminates information in accordance with the present invention, is shown in Fig. 2. The system 200 has at least one processor 202 and a memory 204. The processor 202 uses memory 204 to store the partial view of information related to a subset of other nodes in the network.

In its most basic configuration, computing system 200 is illustrated in Fig. 2 by dashed line 206. Additionally, system 200 may also include additional storage (removable and/or non-removable) including, but not limited to, magnetic or optical disks or tape. Such additional storage is illustrated in Fig. 2 by removable storage 208 and non-removable storage 210. Computer storage media includes volatile and nonvolatile, removable and non-removable media implemented in any method or technology for storage of information such as computer readable instructions, data structures, program modules or other data. Memory 204, removable storage

208 and non-removable storage 210 are all examples of computer storage media. Computer storage media includes, but is not limited to, RAM, ROM, EEPROM, flash memory or other memory technology, CD-ROM, digital versatile disks (DVD) or other optical storage, magnetic cassettes, magnetic tape, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or any other medium which can be used to store the desired information and which can be accessed by system 200. Any such computer storage media may be part of system 200. Depending on the configuration and type of computing device, memory 204 may be volatile, non-volatile or some combination of the two.

System 200 may also contain communications connection(s) 212 that allow the device to communicate with other devices, such as other nodes 104, 106, 108, 110 or 112 shown in Fig. 1. Additionally, system 200 may have input device(s) 214 such as keyboard, mouse, pen, voice input device, touch input device, etc. Output device(s) 216 such as a display, speakers, printer, etc. may also be included. All these devices are well known in the art and need not be discussed at length here.

Computer system 200 typically includes at least some form of computer readable media. Computer readable media can be any available media that can be accessed by system 200. By way of example, and not limitation, computer readable media may comprise computer storage media and communication media. Computer storage media includes volatile and nonvolatile, removable and non-removable media implemented in any method or technology for storage of information such as computer readable instructions, data structures, program modules or other data. Computer storage media includes, but is not limited to, RAM, ROM, EEPROM, flash memory or other memory technology, CD-ROM, digital versatile disks (DVD) or other optical storage, magnetic cassettes, magnetic tape, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage

devices, or any other medium which can be used to store the desired information and which can be accessed by system 200. Communication media typically embodies computer readable instructions, data structures, program modules or other data in a modulated data signal such as a carrier wave or other transport mechanism and includes any information delivery media. The term "modulated data signal" means a signal that has one or more of its characteristics set or changed in such a manner as to encode information in the signal. By way of example, and not limitation, communication media includes wired media such as a wired network or direct-wired connection, and wireless media such as acoustic, RF, infrared and other wireless media. Combinations of any of the above should also be included within the scope of computer readable media.

With the computing environment of FIG. 2 in mind, logical operations of the various exemplary embodiments described below in connection with FIGS. 3 and 4 may be implemented: (1) as a sequence of computer implemented acts or program modules running on a computing system; and/or (2) as interconnected machine logic circuits or circuit modules within the computing system.

Turning now to FIG. 3, a process 300 illustrates the functional components related displaying a doctor's or physician's profile, from the user's or patient's perspective. Flow 300 generally relates to the process performed by the patient on the patient's computer system, such as system 102 shown in Fig. 1. Flow 300 begins with access operation 302, wherein the user accesses a search engine. Access operation 302 relates to a particular embodiment wherein the patient is searching for a doctor's profile, but may not know where to search, i.e., which website has such profiles. Alternatively, the user may simply prefer using a search engine as a method of accessing different web pages. It will be appreciated that in other embodiments, the user may

not use a search engine but may simply access a predetermined web page that provides search capabilities on its database, such as database 108 shown in Fig. 1.

Upon entering the search terms into the search engine (or search user interface of specific profile web page), receive operation 304 receives one or more profiles matching the search terms. Some information is provided regarding the profiles such that the user may select, at operation 306, a specific profile to view.

Upon receiving the selection for a specific profile, display operation 308 displays the profile for the specific doctor or physician. Included, in one embodiment, in the displayed profile is the physician verified information, along with the certification information, preferably certified by an independent third party with some certifying credentials, and patient entered information. As stated above, the patient entered information relates to past patients who have referred or otherwise can comment as to the particular doctor. In this way, the user or potential patient can view quite a bit of information about a doctor in order to make a decision as to whether to hire the same.

The above specification, examples and data provide a complete description of the manufacture and use of the composition of the invention. Since many embodiments of the invention can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, the invention resides in the claims hereinafter appended.

Turning now to FIG. 4, a process 400 for compiling information, including certified information, regarding a particular physician profile is shown. The start operation is initiated in response to accessing or obtaining specific physician information. Such information will likely be obtained from the doctor himself/herself through a client computer and a network and server system such as that depicted in FIG. 1. However, the information may also be obtained through

other means. Once initiated, the operation flow of the compiling process 400 passes from the start operation to the access operation 402, in which information regarding a physician is accessed and verified. The information need not be verified at this point, but it may be possible to do so.

The operation flow then passes to the receipt of user comments operation 404. Such information may consist of, but is not limited to, comments, ratings and/or recommendations submitted by users to the system. This information may also be verified, but it need not be.

Next, the operation flow passes to the perform certification process operation 406. This process involves the verification of doctor-specific information, such as the name of the medical school, the graduation date, certifications, licensures, internships, fellowships, suspensions, license revocations, state or federal censures or reprimands, etc. Other information may also be available and certified, such as geographic location. The types of information described herein are intended to be provided as examples only and are in no way intended to delimit the scope of this invention in any way.

Following the certification process, the operation flow passes to the creation, or compiling, of the doctor profile 110 in compile operation 408. In this operation, the doctor-provided, independent certification-provided, and patient-provided information is compiled into a report and stored as a profile 110 in the database 108. Other sections of information may also be provided. The particular embodiment described herein is not intended to limit the types of information which may be provided and/or certified.

Having described the embodiments of the present invention with reference to the figures above, it should be appreciated that numerous modifications may be made to the present invention that will readily suggest themselves to those skilled in the art and which are

encompassed in the spirit of the invention disclosed and as defined in the appended claims. Indeed, while a presently preferred embodiment has been described for purposes of this disclosure, various changes and modifications may be made which are well within the scope of the present invention. For example, the present invention may not be limited specifically to doctor information but, instead, may be applicable to any kind of professionals, such as engineers, accountants, veterinarians, dentists, etc. Additionally, the order of operations shown in FIGS. 3 and 4 is provided for illustrative purposes only and, in accordance with other embodiments, may be modified or performed simultaneously. Furthermore, it should be appreciated that the scope of the present invention accommodates other operations that may be added or removed depending on the needs of the particular entity or entities implementing or using the system.

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method of displaying physician information to a plurality of patients, said method comprising:

compiling physician verified information;

compiling certification information;

compiling past-patient provided information;

creating a physician profile using the physician verified information, the certification information, and the past-patient provided information; and

providing access to the profile over the Internet.

2. A method as defined in claim 1 wherein the information included in the profile is verified by an independent third party.

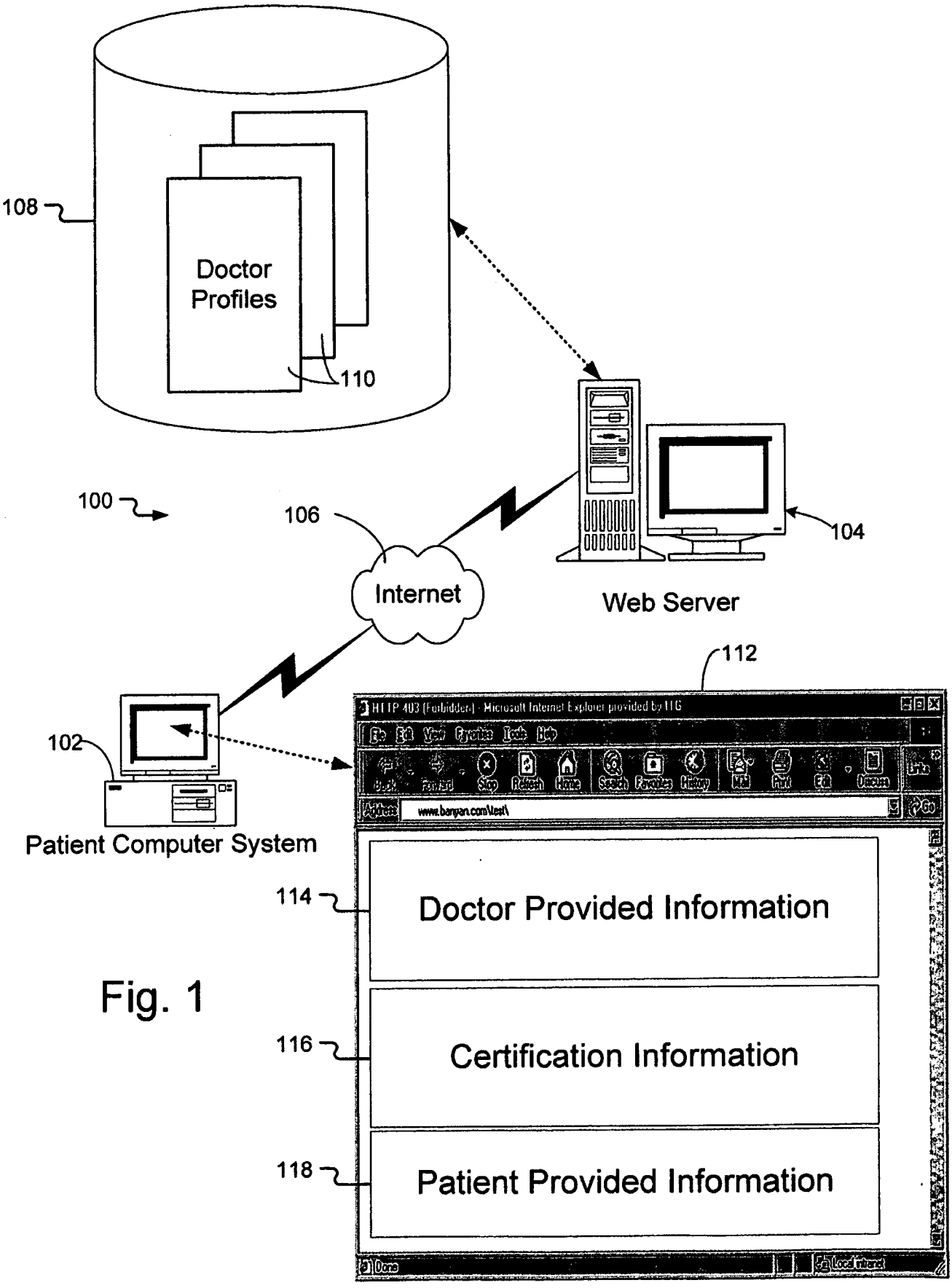
108
Doctor Profiles
110
100
106
Internet
104
Web Server
112
102
Patient Computer System
114
Doctor Provided Information
116
Certification Information
118
Patient Provided Information

Fig. 1

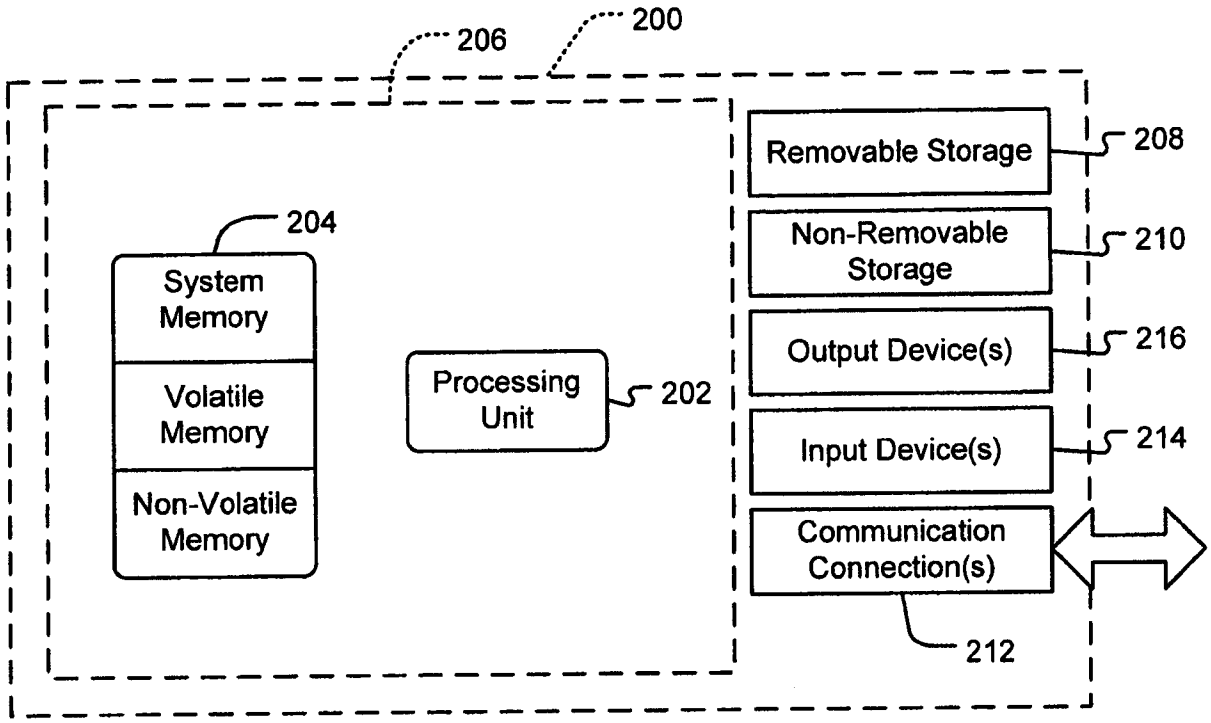
206
200
Removable Storage
208
204
Non-Removable Storage
210
System Memory
Output Device(s)
216
Volatile Memory
Processing Unit
202
Input Device(s)
214
Non-Volatile Memory
Communication Connection(s)
212

Fig. 2

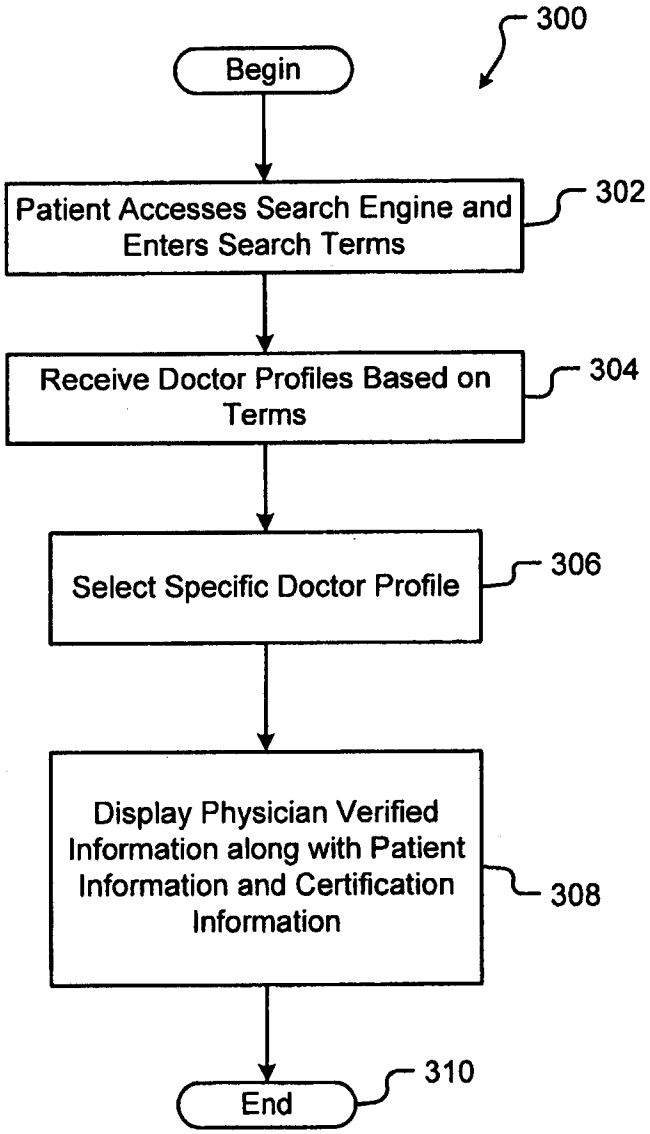
300
Begin
Patient Accesses Search Engine and Enters Search Terms
302
Receive Doctor Profiles Based on Terms
304
Select Specific Doctor Profile
306
Display Physician Verified Information along with Patient Information and Certification Information
308
End
310

Fig. 3

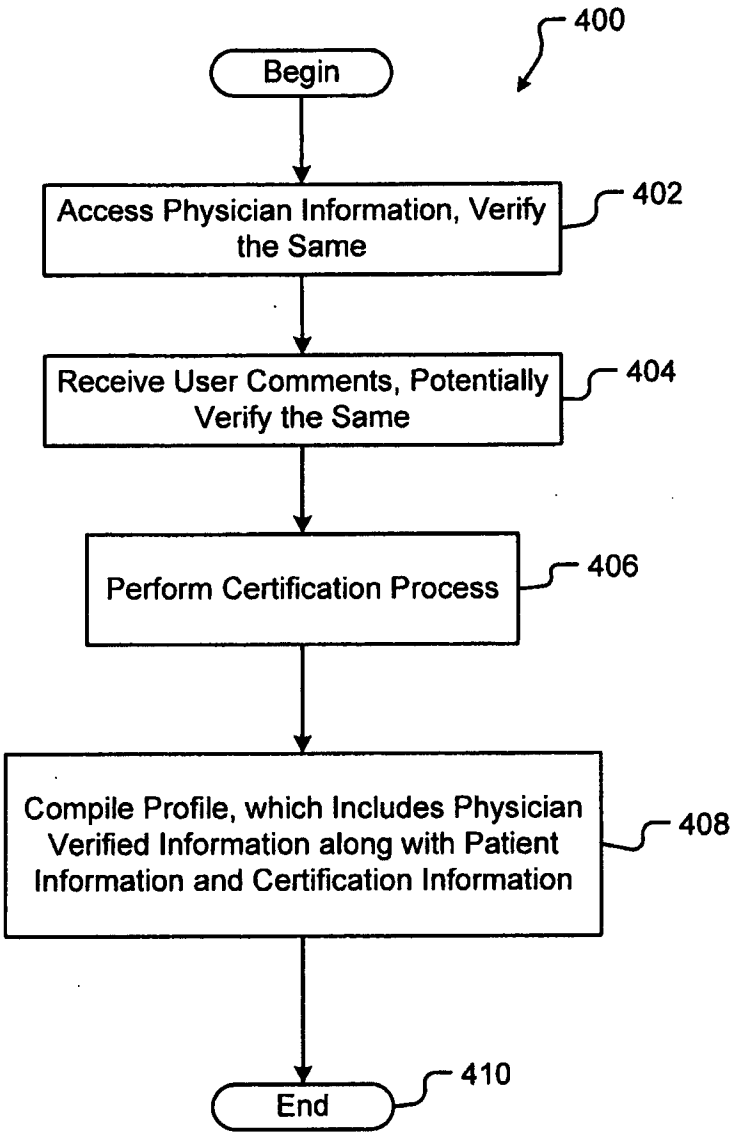
400
Begin
Access Physician Information, Verify the Same
402
Receive User Comments, Potentially Verify the Same
404
Perform Certification Process
406
Compile Profile, which Includes Physician Verified Information along with Patient Information and Certification Information
408
End
410

Fig. 4

PATENT APPLICATION SERIAL NO. _____

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
FEE RECORD SHEET

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