



Home News Sports Weekly Features Entertainment & Dining Extras Classifieds Community Special Sections

Local/State • World/Nation • Business • Obituaries • Editorials • Letters/Comments • Topstory • Weather • Today's Photos

Wednesday, July 28, 2004 • Twin Falls, Idaho

TOP LINKS: Jobs Autos Real Estate Obituaries Auctions Travel Mo

LOCAL/STATE NEWS

Paging Dr. Robot ... High-tech system improves patients' access to doctors

By Sandy Miller Times-News writer

TWIN FALLS – He might be a robot, but he's very personable.

"You're ready to shake hands with him," said Jerry Beck, a Magic Valley Regional Medical Center board member and one of several people in the community who got the opportunity to meet Remote Presence-6, or "Dr. Robot," as some have nicknamed him, on Tuesday.

Welcome to health care in the 21st century. The robot allows your doctor to talk to you, answer your questions, even examine you, without being in the room. However, you can see your doctor face to face on the computer screen that is the robot's head.

You might say it's the next best thing to being there. Instead of just seeing you once or twice, your doctor would be able to talk to you, even examine you four or five times during your two-day stay in the hospital.

"It takes a health care provider and presents him to a health care need," said Sam Danna, regional vice president of InTouch Health, the Santa Barbara, Calif., company that developed and markets the RP-6.

And your physician would have instant access to the experts at teaching hospitals when it comes to prescribing your care. And medical students in rural settings would be able to touch base any time they wanted to with their advisers thousands of miles away.

"We're only a robot away from the medical school," said Dr. David McClusky, a local surgeon who teaches medicine at Emory University in Georgia a month each year and takes surgical residents under his wing. "It keeps the quality of care at a cutting edge."



CORY MYERS/The Times-News Yulun Wang, center, CEO of InTouch Health, talks to College of Southern Idaho Executive Vice President Jerry Beck, left, and Vice President of Planning, Development and Student Services Curtis Eaton through the RP-6, a mobile remote presence robot, Thursday at Magic Valley Regional Medical Center. Wang was controlling the robot from Santa Barbara, Calif.,

McClusky said the robot would be especially helpful in recruiting more medical students to practice in a rural setting, which McClusky said is the best place to practice medicine.

"I live in a small community with all the activities, and I am still associated with a teaching facility," McClusky said. "I have the best of both worlds."

The RP-6 system has been in use at hospitals and long-term facilities for a few months. Magic Valley Regional hasn't not yet decided whether to lease a system that costs \$3,000 a month. The robot is only available on a lease basis as technology rapidly changes and is constantly being improved. Hospitals wanting to keep up with technology wouldn't want to put money into something that would be obsolete tomorrow, Beck said.

"You wouldn't want to own one," he said.

When it comes to technology, the robot isn't any more complicated than a computer game. The robot has sensors that direct it safely through a hospital's hallways, elevators and rooms. The person on the other end operates it with a computer, a software program and a joystick. He can make the robot's camera zero in wherever it needs to in order to evaluate your progress. The computer screen that is the robot's head can be moved up, down and sideways.

Advertisement for First Federal Bank with text: "Where The Customer Comes First!" and URL http://www.firstfd.com

Military Message

STORY OPTIONS with icons for print, email, and social media

LOCAL TOP JOBS

INSTALLERS Dish Network

SALES NBC 38

PRESS OPERATOR The Times-News

STORE CLERK State of Idaho

MEDICAL Blaine Manor

MORE TOP JOBS ABOUT TOP JOBS

SEARCH

Search input field

News Web

DO SEARCH

WEATHER

Twin Falls

Current Weather



Fair

Last reported: Jul. 28, 2004 3:53 p.m.

PAST ISSUES

Su M T W Th F

demonstrating how the robot can offer health care experts immediate and frequent services.

The robot helps health care organizations answer one of the most pressing questions on their minds these days.

"How in the heck are we going to care for an aging population and not go broke doing it?" said Dr. Yulun Wang, chief executive officer of InTouch and part of the engineering team that invented the RP-6.

The first wave of baby boomers is entering its golden years, and health care needs are increasing. The robot increases access to care.

"It brings the health care professional instantly to the patient's side when care is needed," Wang said.

Times-News writer Sandy Miller can be reached at 735-3264 or by e-mail at smiller@magicvalley.com.

TOP REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE PRINT VERSION OF THE TIMES-NEWS AND IT'S DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR EVERY MORNING!

You don't have to sign in, log-on or tune in; There's no need to surf, search, fast-forward or rewind. Just pick it up and start reading!

- [Click Here To Subscribe](#) •

Rockit Robot

BugBrain Walking Robot
 Only \$169 for complete kit. Fully programmable. Educational and fun.
www.yostengineering.com



Home • News • Sports • Weekly Features • Entertainment & Dining • Extras • Classifieds • Community • Special Sections



[Read Our Privacy Policy](#)

[Click here to make magicvalley.com your homepage](#)
Copyright © 2004, Lee Publications Inc.

Magicvalley.com is an on-line division of The Times-News, published daily at 132 W. Fairfield St., Twin Falls, Idaho 83301 by Lee Publications, Inc., a subsidiary of Lee Enterprises.