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BMJ 2004; 329: 474 (28 August), doi: 10.1136/bmj.329.7464.474-b

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News

Meet Rudy, the world's first "robodoc"

Roger Dobson

Abergavenny

The University of California Davis Medical Center has begun testing a 1.68 m tall **robot**, Rudy, as a way of allowing physicians to check and interact with their hospital patients after surgery without the need for the doctor to be there in person. Rudy is the key player in the centre's clinical trial.

From his office or home, urologist Lars Ellison can guide the agile **robot** down the halls of the hospital and into the rooms of his patients. Equipped with a camera, television screen, and microphone, Rudy allows Dr Ellison to have a conversation with his patient and with relatives.

Both the doctor and patient can see and hear each other, and the **robot's** camera can zoom in to provide a view of the patient's vital signs and surgical incision.



Rudy the **robotic** doctor on trial at the University of

"We think using a **robot** that allows us to personally visit and check up on our patients after surgery will prove safe and effective," says Dr Ellison.

The **robot** operates through the hospital's wireless network. To navigate the 90.7 kg machine, the doctor uses a computer, video camera with built-in audio capabilities, and a joystick similar to those used for playing video games.

One theory, which the trial results should answer, is that patients prefer seeing their own doctor after surgery rather than a doctor they don't know, even if their doctor only visits

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California Davis Medical Center them via the **robot**.

"The purpose of this study is to assess if there is a significant difference in patient outcomes when postoperative patients are managed with `standard rounding' [conventional ward rounds] versus `telerounding' [ward rounds conducted via a **robot**]," says the trial protocol.

The study will compare the health outcomes of patients who see the **robot** and those who see a real physician in their rooms after elective surgeries.