

## Robot Subs For Doctor On Rounds

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Many doctors spend a lot of time shuttling between offices and hospitals to see patients and make rounds.

Now there's a new robot that's taking care of some of the legwork, reports **Dr. Emily Senay** on Wednesday's *The Early Show*.

It's making its debut in a few select hospitals around the country, where it's being studied to see if it can benefit patients, too.

In Sentara Norfolk General Hospital in Virginia, urologist Michael Fabrizio operates one such robot by remote control from a computer console in his office or home to check up on his patients.

"We're able to see our patients any time day or night 24 hours a day," says Fabrizio. "We're able to physically go in and discuss the patient's care look at the incisions, it really gives us great access to the patients. It also improves efficiency."

Prostate surgery patient Paul Rist is happy with his robotic experience. "If it's going to enable you to see them even more than what you might see them then I think it's a phenomenal tool," says Rist. "I would hope that we're not totally taking the personal touch out of it - I think medicine is a field that always has to have a personal touch in it."

The robot comes with built in safety measures to prevent collisions.

The hope is that studies will show robots actually improve patient care and reduce costs.

"If we utilize the robot properly and efficiently we can probably reduce the length of stay of patients," says Dr. Fabrizio. "We've seen a reduction in our hospital stay of about point two days... When you reduce point two days in a hospital and you're looking at the number of patients we typically see in a year, you could save a million dollars a year using a system like this."

The next study plans to look at whether the robot is effective in the emergency room, and if it can help cut down on those infamous waits to see a doctor when you're not acutely ill in the emergency room.

The robots could also help provide better care in remote or rural locations, and also play a role in helping to monitor patients in nursing homes.