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Robots to care for Norwegian elderly

Gadgets to help aged in their home

by Katie Scott published on 8 February 2008

Like many Western nations, Norway is facing a crisis as the number of elderly people in its population needing care increases.

But Reuters is reporting that teams of Norwegian researchers are looking at the possibility of introducing robots into homes to help shoulder the burden of care.

According to the news agency, Norway faces a growing shortage of health care staff over the next 5-10 years, and 2020 will be a crunch point when large numbers of post-World War 2 "baby boomers" leave the workforce.

The teams involved in the project are looking at how robots and gadgets could be employed in the homes of elderly Norwegians.

"Technology will contribute to resolve part of the challenge with employees in the health care sector", Olav Ulleren, head of a group representing Norwegian municipalities, told Reuters. "It could also help people live longer in their own homes."

Ulleren said robots and other devices could do housework like washing clothes and dishes, as well as cleaning the floor.

Gadgets to monitor health could also be employed.

However, Ulleren added that the new technology would not to replace human care and tenderness "but provide extra help in situations where more health care workers are not available".

"Everyone wants to take care of themselves as long as possible, and it is not the intention to rob anybody of the responsibility of caring for the elderly, this will just add another dimension", Ulleren said. Using technology for household



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chores would make human health care more personal, he said.

He could not say when the first robots would be put into use.