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Scientists promise robot nurses by 2010

May help to ease pressure on hospitals

by Amber Maitland published on 22 January 2007

A group of scientists believe they've got the answer to hospital staff shortages and superbugs: robot nurses.

The IWARD project hopes to have system with three robot prototypes ready by 2010, says a report in the Mail on Sunday. The robot nurses will be able to mop up spillages or mess, communicate with patients, and guide visitors to patients.

The scientists from the universities of Warwick, Cardiff, Dublin, and Newcastle are being led by Thomas Schlegal, from the Fraunhofer Institute in Germany, who told The Engineer magazine, "The idea is not only to have mobile robots but also a full system of integrated information terminals and guide lights, so the hospital is full of interaction and intelligence".

The robots, which could also distribute medicines, and take patients' temperatures at a distance, aren't mean to replace nurses. Rather, they're designed to give staff more time to spend with patients, and keep wards cleaner.

They'll be able to move around hospitals using sensors and cameras, and if they're widely adopted, may even get their own lanes.

