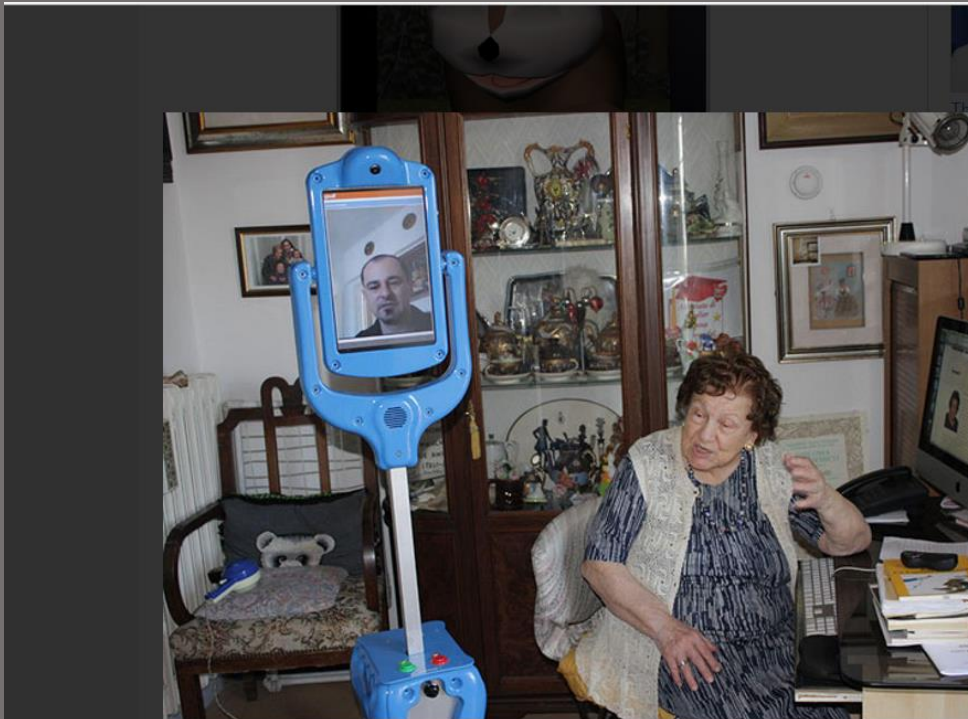


Led by researchers at Örebro University in Sweden, Giraff Plus launched in Italy, Sweden and Spain in 2012. The system operates as a network of sensors placed around a person's home and a mobile robot that is connected to the Internet.

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Together, the Giraff Plus system monitors a participant's health, well-being, and activity level. Doctors, healthcare professionals, and even family members use the system to communicate with the patient and follow their health. "It's basically like Skype," says Dr. Amy Loutfi, lead coordinator for the project. "If you are the person checking in, your face appears on the screen as the robot's face. You control where you want the robot to move."

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For doctors, the system allows for quick but frequent check-ins to assure patients when there's nothing to worry about. When there is a pressing emergency, the monitoring allows for immediate response. The test phase of the system was completed at the end of 2014. Now developers are exploring how to expand its use beyond caring for the elderly and how to help doctors avoid information overload from 24-hour monitoring.

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"The system is a preventative," says Loutfi. "Doctors can see what's going on with the patient before serious situations manifest. That saves lives and money."

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