Scientists study robot-human interactions

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British scientists are studying how people interact with robots to determine what future machines should look like and how they should behave.

The yearlong research, being conducted in a house near Hatfield, England, involves a 4-foot-tall, silver-headed robot, The Guardian reported.

The robot has no name. "Once you name them then people will put gender associations on them, which is a big problem," researcher Kheng Lee Koay told the newspaper.

The study indicates people become uneasy when the robot comes too close or approaches directly from in front. And the volunteers say they strongly dislike it when the robot moves behind them.

A conference on human-robot interaction will be next week at the University of Hertfordshire and one suggestion to be considered is offered by a Japanese robotics expert, Shuji Hashimoto, The Guardian noted.

He suggests ignoring Isaac Asimov's famous "first law of robotics," which states a robot should be programmed never to harm a human, either deliberately or by inaction.

Hashimoto says robots should be given the ability to make decisions and even harm humans if necessary.

"The philosophy of Asimov is too human-centered," says Hashimoto.

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