New study to evaluate robots as exercise trainers (w/ Video)

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Maja Mataric', who directs the University of Southern California Center for Robotics and Embedded Systems, will lead an effort to evaluate robots as exercise coaches for adults of all ages, with a particular focus on the elderly.

The effort, entitled "Robot Motivator: Towards Adaptive Health Games for Productive Long-Term Interaction," will examine the influence of virtual social characters on people's motivation to exercise.

The USC study will use 70 volunteer participants, 20 of those aged 60 and older and living in a managed care facility, and 50 living at home and covering the adult age spectrum. The participants will be divided into two groups.

One group will have as their trainer a physical robot, who will demonstrate the moves they are to follow."

The other half of the subjects will be coached by the same robot demonstrating the same moves — but on a video screen.

The goal is to determine how important physical presence is to robotic exercise motivation among older subjects. The CRES is a center of study of "socially assistive robotics," a term coined by Mataric' to describe robotic systems to help in treatment of heath issues.

Source: University of Southern California (news : web)