Scientists in Japan develop robot to help patients with dementia

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Scientists in Japan have developed a robot that can aid people with mild dementia by giving verbal reminders about things such as appointments and taking medicine.

The robot was developed by the National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities, the University of Tokyo and the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, officials said Friday. They plan to have it ready for use in five years.

The machine is based on a cylindrical-shaped robot about 40 centimeters tall (about 1 foot, 4 inches) and weighing five kilograms (2.2 pounds) that was produced by NEC Corp. The team adapted the robot to serve dementia patients by installing a new conversation program.

The robot can recognize its "master's" face and voice, and speaks according to a specified schedule.

It calls its master by saying his or her name and gives reminders such as, "Today is the day you go to the day-service center, isn't it?" or, "The person coming to pick you up will be here soon. Why don't you use the bathroom?"

If the robot hears the doorbell, it is able to alert its master. If there is no response, the robot repeats the phrase and tries to get its master's attention by saying, "Did you understand?"

The team asked five women living in a nursing home to use the [robot](#) for a five-day trial. They responded well to the device, according to the developer.

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