

Partnership unveils healthcare robot coach: Autom

October 22 2012, by Bob Yirka



PCH International is partnering with Intuitive Automata to create and bring to market what the two are calling a "healthcare robot coach." They have named it Autom (a homophone of autumn). The purpose of the robot is to help people develop healthy eating habits. It sits on a table or countertop and serves as a tool to help people track what they eat, and also offers encouraging comments to help people achieve eating goals.

Autom speaks to its owner and follows his or her movements with its

eyes, though only when touch activated. It also has a [touch screen](#) embedded in its belly that allows the user to enter food information. The [robot](#) can be used to track the caloric content of meals consumed or those being considered by accessing, via WiFi, an online database maintained by Intuitive. The company claims it has entered information for over 75,000 [food items](#) including those from many nationally known restaurants. The robot can also display historical information on its belly screen in a variety of formats, including graphs, to help users compare actual eating habits with objectives. The robot also offers encouraging comments to help the user eat the foods that are good for them and to avoid those that are not.

Comments on the [Autom](#) website suggest that potential customers view the robot as a personal coach, akin to a human counterpart, because company engineers have programmed the Autom to learn about the person being coached and to adjust encouraging comments accordingly. They also announce that Autom will be available by the second quarter of next year and will cost \$199, with an additional \$19 [surcharge](#) per month for access to the online database.

In addition to following a person around a room with its eyes, Autom can blink or wink to add emotional heft to its encouraging commentary. Representatives from Intuitive say that the robot format, as compared to apps on a [smartphone](#), allow for bonding to occur between human and machine, which in the end helps users achieve their eating goals via a relationship that develops between the two – similar to the benefit people derive from hiring a human healthcare specialist.

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