



San Francisco Hospital Has Self-Directed Robots to Free Up Caretakers

By Janet Burns

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In addition to semi-autonomous support bots, UCSF also features a range of upgraded tech for patients and staff

Hospitality and robotics have been solidifying their close relationship of late, as via the California hotel that began testing [robotic bellhops](#) last summer and a Japanese theme park planning to equip its new hotel with a [full robotic staff](#). Soon, however, automatons may also fill support roles in the healthcare field, as announced last week by a California medical system.

On February 1, the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) launched a number of high-tech features in its three new centers, including a fleet of service robots in the Benioff Children's Hospital. Dr. Seth Bokser, chief medical officer for the center, told the [San Francisco Chronicle](#):

We want to use technology in a way that frees up our human providers to do what they're good at, which is to focus on our patients. Patient-centered care is not just about putting technology into a hospital.

The [autonomously navigating](#) robots were developed by [Aethon](#), a Pittsburgh company also responsible for MedEx medication tracking software. The bot-makers suggest that TUG units offer "24/7 improved productivity" to hospitals by taking over the more menial of support tasks (such as delivering supplies and meals), and will therefore allow trained staff to direct more time and focus toward patient well-being.



The robots come **equipped** with biometrically and PIN-locked drawers for secure equipment and sample transport, are self-charging (with up to 10 hours of activity between charges), and can carry up to 1,000 pounds.

The company also notes that hospitals using Aethon TUG robots may, in addition to freeing up their employees and preventing work-related heavy-lifting injuries, “[enhance] their reputation as being on the leading edge of medical care” and show a commitment to integrating new tech.

In total, the UCSF expansion created 289 new patient beds between the Benioff Children’s Hospital (built by \$250M from, and named for, Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff and his wife, Lynne), the Betty Irene Moore Women’s Hospital, and the Bakar Cancer Hospital. Resources created by the facilities’ \$50M information technology budget include updated workstations, network infrastructure, communications systems, and patient engagement tech, administrators noted in a **press release**.



Among other things, the high-tech facilities will also allow patients to stream media in their rooms, and for staff to chat remotely with one another and with patients.

<http://www.psfk.com/2015/02/ucsf-aethon-tug-robots-san-francisco-hospital.html>