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SMART HOSPITAL ROBOT IS AN AUTONOMOUS, HIGH TECH COURIER

 SPORT & FITNESS

At UCSF in San Francisco, 25 robotic couriers called TUGs provide efficient, reliable deliveries between hospital staff.

With the robotics industry rapidly advancing, one of the most exciting areas of development is within healthcare. We have already seen the **Veebot** — which automates the process of drawing blood, and **MEDi** — a robot that distracts kids from uncomfortable medical examinations. Now, in San Francisco, a fleet of 25 smart courier robots called **TUGs** are taking over delivery tasks, enabling staff to concentrate on more important jobs.

The sheer size of UCSF Hospital often leads to lengthy journeys, sometimes with heavy cargo. Looking to combat this issue, the new TUGs are able to make 50,000 deliveries a week — efficiently transporting supplies between staff across different floors and wings. They can carry loads of up to 1,000 pounds including lab specimens, linens, meals, medicines and paperwork. Each TUG is equipped with over 30 sensors, as well as sonar, lasers, infrared and a camera. They have the complicated hospital floor plan embedded in their hard drives and are able to navigate the building autonomously, sensing the size of the corridors and avoiding collisions. They can undertake scheduled or on demand tasks, communicating over wifi to call elevators and open doors.

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Members of staff program transportation tasks via a simple interface on the robot and built-in fingerprint sensors ensure that only authorized staff can access and program appropriate services. Supplies are scanned when they are put in or taken out of the robot, ensuring that the right patient receives the right medicines. The robots can work around the clock, so clinical staff and service workers can get on with caring for patients, decision-making and providing human support for team members. Are there other workspaces which could benefit from handing over their transportation tasks to robots?

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