ABC 7pm News

Host:

Well robots in the home to do the housework may still be years away, but they’re already helping out with some senior citizens. A Melbourne nursing home is using them to interact and play games with residents. The home says the robots improve the quality of life for people with dementia. Medical reporter Sophie Scott has the story.

Sophie Scott:

This robot might look like a toy but it’s actually a whole lot more.

Matilda:

Number thirty-four. Three-four.

Rajiv:

It also helps the elderly develop a sense of independence.

Sophie Scott:

It incorporates emotionally intelligent software, so that the robot can read a person’s feelings by the tone in their voice, and interact accordingly. Researchers are running a trial to see what impact the robots have on nursing home residents.

Rajiv:

It can also detect their moods, for example if they are in a low mood it can send emails to their relatives to come and visit them.

Sophie Scott:

It can quiz residents to keep them mentally active.

Matilda:

I’m happy to be spending some time with you. Let’s begin the quiz.

Sophie Scott:

Its eyes are twin cameras with a face recognition system, while the ears are microphones that can pick up sounds. It can track and memorize up to thirty different faces. While the robot roams around it uses an ultrasound system in its chest to detect objects. It can walk or dance on its own, and when the battery is running low it knows to recharge itself.