

# EmPressions

*Employee Newsletter for Healthcare Professionals of EmCare*

## High Tech Tool Gives Rural ED Access to Off-Site Specialists

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Many rural Emergency Departments have only limited access to on-call specialists. However, that may soon change thanks to remote-presence technology being used right now at Santa Ynez Valley Cottage Hospital in Solvang, California. This ED is using a unique solution to give its patients access to specialists.

Cottage Health Systems hospitals are working with In Touch Health to give patients access to specialists through a robotic platform with a screen that transmits a physician's image from an off-site care station. The consulting physician can move the robot to a patient's bedside and communicate directly. The robot also transmits data to the consulting physician, including heart sounds, rhythm strip, and oximetry.

"The robot will provide a remote consultation with a cardiologist from the main Cottage Hospital in Santa Barbara when the Emergency Physician sees a need," said Dr. Glenn Wollman, Regional Chief Medical Officer of the Pacific West Region. Dr. Wollman is helping to test this new technology at Santa Ynez.

As an example of how the robot works, it would allow a cardiologist in another town to join the ED physician at bedside in helping to determine whether or not to transfer a chest pain patient who is a borderline decision. The cardiologist



**The In Touch Health robot allows rural and suburban EDs to access off-site specialists through a robotic platform that transmits the physician's image.**

uses a joystick, monitor, and keyboard to talk with the patient, review his chart, EKG, and monitoring, and interact with the family to assist in making a decision. This not only assists in caring for a patient, but it is reassuring to patients and family members to have a specialist directly involved.

## Robot Improves Access to Specialists

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By setting up the remote care station at a convenient place for consultants at the main Cottage Hospital, the ED Physician of the sister facility can also be remotely present. This also will allow other consultants to have access to patients at Santa Ynez Valley Cottage Hospital.

Currently, the In Touch Health robot is being used on teaching rounds on the surgical floors at John Hopkins University. Dr. Wollman will be working with our physicians to test the efficacy and response by patients and physicians. We hope that this technology may be a solution for the shortage of on-call physicians in rural and suburban EDs. So far the response has been quite positive.❖

*If you have questions or comments about this article, e-mail [angel\\_iscovich@emcare.com](mailto:angel_iscovich@emcare.com).*



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*EmCare hopes that the In Touch Health robot technology may be a solution for the shortage of on-call physicians in rural and suburban Emergency Departments.*