Tommy the robot nurse helps Italian doctors care for coronavirus patients

By The World, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.15.20

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Level **560L**

Image 1. One of the six robots at the Ospedale di Circolo Hospital in Varese, Italy, on April 8, 2020. The robots help health care professionals assist coronavirus patients. Photo: Luca Bruno/AP Photo

Sometimes doctors and nurses need help. At one hospital in Italy, they are getting help from Tommy, a robot nurse.

Tommy is one of six robots helping doctors and nurses in Italy. They take care of coronavirus patients.

The coronavirus is an illness like the flu. It began in China. It has been spreading around the world since December 2019.

The robots work at the Circolo Hospital in Italy. There have been many cases of the coronavirus nearby.

Child Size, With Large Eyes

The robots are the size of a child. They have large eyes that blink. They are wheeled into rooms and left by a patient's bed. That allows doctors to look after others who are in more serious condition.

Gianni Bonelli is in charge of the Circolo Hospital. He described the robot's features. The robot has a screen and a computer. Patients can talk to nurses and doctors through the robot.

Robots can check on patients' health.

They do not replace people, Bonelli said. Patients count on people, he said. "We know how important it is for them," he said.

The robots let doctors and nurses have fewer visits with patients. Fewer visits could make them less likely to get the coronavirus. The robots also do not need masks and gowns. That saves them for other workers.

Fighting the coronavirus is a big job. That is why medical workers need help. Still, it takes a while for patients to see that robots are good.

Francesco Dentali is a doctor at the hospital. He said you have to explain to the patient how a robot helps.

Some Do Not Like It

Some do not like it, he said. "But if you explain your aim, the patient is happy because he or she can speak with the doctor," he said.

More than 4,000 Italian health workers have gotten the virus. Sixty-six doctors have died. There have not been enough masks and other things to protect them.

Tommy is the name of the son of a doctor at the hospital. Health workers are not going home after work. They want to avoid spreading the virus to their families.

Bonelli said that the doctor said at least there is someone that he can call by his son's name. It is a way for the doctor to feel at home, he said.

Tommy and the other robot nurses have one more advantage. They do not get tired. After a charge of batteries, they are back at work.

Quiz

1   Read the section "Child Size, With Large Eyes."

Select the sentence from the section that explains how Tommy will help keep doctors from becoming sick.

(A)   They are wheeled into rooms and left by a patient's bed.

(B)   Gianni Bonelli is in charge of the Circolo Hospital.

(C)   Fewer visits could make them less likely to get the coronavirus.

(D)   Still, it takes a while for patients to see that robots are good.

2   Read the paragraph from the section "Some Do Not Like It."

> *More than 4,000 Italian health workers have gotten the virus. Sixty-six doctors have died. There have not been enough masks and other things to protect them.*

Which question is answered in this paragraph?

(A)   How has the coronavirus affected health workers in Italy?

(B)   How do patients feel about talking to robots?

(C)   Why is the robot nurse named Tommy?

(D)   When did the coronavirus start spreading around the world?

3   What is the main idea of the introduction [paragraphs 1-4]?

(A)   The coronavirus is a flu-like illness affecting people in China and Italy.

(B)   A robot named Tommy is helping treat coronavirus patients in Italy.

(C)   Tommy the robot has a screen that lets patients talk to their doctors.

(D)   There have been many cases of the coronavirus in Italy.

4   The main idea of the article is that Tommy will help keep doctors and nurses safe from the coronavirus.

Which key detail from the article supports the article's main idea?

(A)   Gianni Bonelli is in charge of the Circolo Hospital. He described the robot's features.

(B)   They do not replace people, Bonelli said. Patients count on people, he said.

(C)   The robots also do not need masks and gowns. That saves them for other workers.

(D)   Tommy and the other robot nurses have one more advantage. They do not get tired.

Answer Key

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