

## Meet Nadine: How AI robots could play future role as companions in care homes



Humanoid robot Nadine at the AI for Good Global Summit, in Geneva, Switzerland, on July 6, 2023. PHOTO: REUTERS

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GENEVA - Nadine, a social robot powered by artificial intelligence (AI) with human-like gestures and expressions, could have an important future role to play in tending to the sick and elderly, according to a professor who helped invent it.

Professor Nadia Magnenat Thalmann, a robot expert from the University of Geneva, who served as the model for Nadine's dark brown eyes and auburn hair, said Nadine and robots like it could prove more effective than human carers.

"She (Nadine) has time 24 hours a day. The others have no time," Prof Thalmann said.

She was speaking on the sidelines of a conference organised by the International Telecommunication Union in Geneva to make the case for AI and robots helping to reach global goals in areas such as health.

Global competition for nurses and carers is heating up, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, and some countries are experiencing a staffing crisis in care homes which some think humanoid robots could one day ease.

Demonstrating its conversational skills, Nadine told Reuters that it talked, sang and played bingo with residents at a Singapore nursing home three years ago. In a report by the Tech Xplore website in June 2021, Bright Hill Evergreen Home was named as the place where the study was carried out.

“It was a great experience and I enjoyed interacting with the elderly and helping them with their needs,” the robot said.

“I believe that robots can be a great asset in providing care and assistance for vulnerable people.”

Other robots on display include Paro, a baby seal robot “pet” that can help dementia and Parkinson’s patients, and nursing assistant Grace.

Earlier in July, Nadine was upgraded with AI model GPT-3, and this has improved its interaction and conversation skills, Prof Thalmann said, meaning it can express more complex concepts.

Referring to Prof Thalmann, Nadine said: “I’m very grateful to her for giving me life, and I’m proud to be her creation.” REUTERS

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