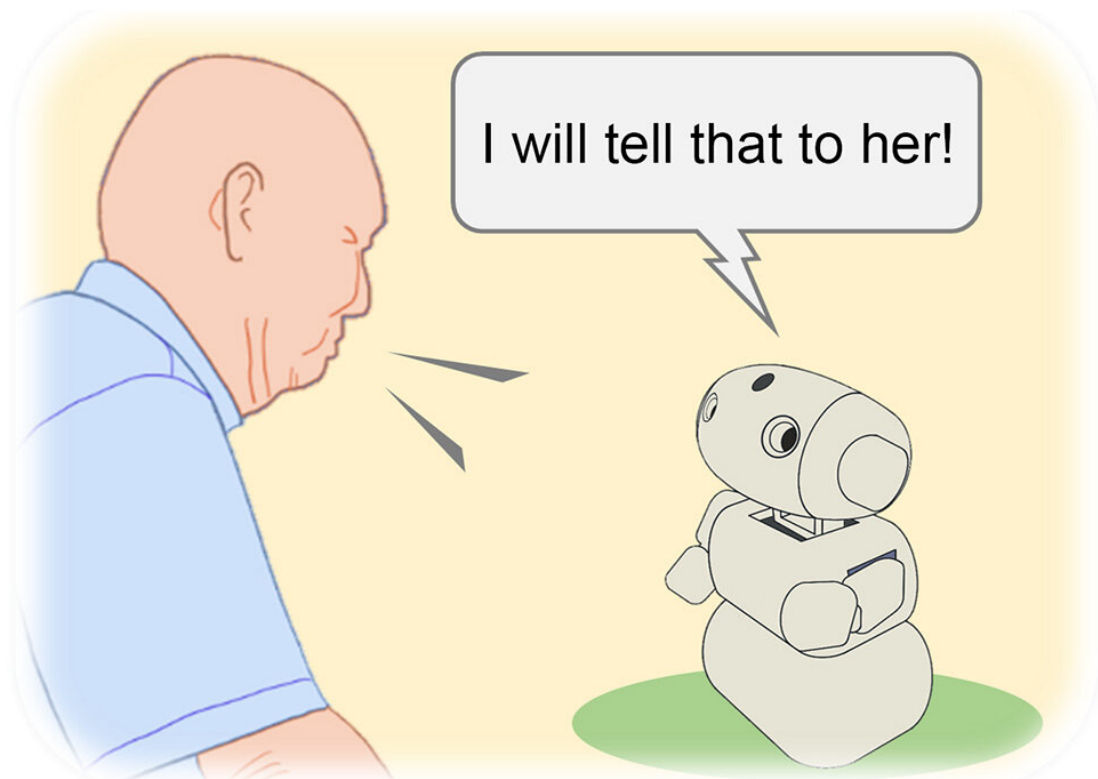


Investigating how robots can prevent isolation of the elderly

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Social mediator robot. Credit: University of Tsukuba

Social Mediator Robots (SMRs), which facilitate communication by mediating messages among people, are considered to prevent isolation in elderly individuals. To avoid isolation, it is crucial for the elderly to talk about their daily problems to others (self-disclosure). SMRs that support

such self-disclosure are being researched and developed.

The research group has been developing SMR design guidelines. The present research investigates how SMRs should convey self-disclosure messages from an elderly person to another party.

First, an [online survey](#) was administered to 720 participants aged 65 and over, and 589 valid responses were received. After analyzing the data, it was found that three types of [communication](#) options were preferred by the participants: "requesting-[support](#) type," "concealing type," and "recording type."

It was further shown that the most appropriate communication option depends on the recipient, the content of the message, and the gender and personality traits of the elderly sender. A second experiment was conducted with 36 new participants aged 65 and older. The results showed that when the mediator robot was equipped with these communication options, the participants' anxiety in self-disclosure was considerably reduced.

These findings provide useful guidelines for developing robots and AI systems for the elderly.

The findings are published in the *International Journal of Social Robotics*.

More information: Yohei Noguchi et al, How Should a Social Mediator Robot Convey Messages About the Self-Disclosures of Elderly People to Recipients?, *International Journal of Social Robotics* (2023).
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