

## **RFID Meets Robotics: A Twist in Mobile Supply Tracking**

**New hospital system uses robots to track and transport medical equipment**

*by Heather Havenstein*

Aethon Inc. today announced a system that uses robots to monitor the movement of medical equipment tagged with radio frequency identification (RFID) chips and fetch it when needed by nurses or other hospital staff.

The new mobile asset utilization system is designed to locate, deliver and recover hospital equipment using RFID tags and two robots, the company said. The system includes a robot called Homer that constantly roams the hospital pinging for RFID tags on hospital equipment to track locations. A second robot, called Tug, delivers clean equipment and returns used equipment to a central location.

The Tug robot is already used at 75 hospitals as a courier to deliver and recover equipment, according to Pittsburgh-based Aethon.

The system is designed to keep track of large numbers of hospital equipment such as IV pumps, wheelchairs and respirators and to ensure staff can access them when they are needed, said Aldo Zini, Aethon's president and CEO.

"A lot of hospitals are beginning to realize that to get the true value out of an asset-tracking system so they can actually improve asset utilization and decrease costs you have to do more than locate assets," he said. "You need to be able to locate it, retrieve it and deliver it to its proper location."

Zini said that many asset-tracking systems used in hospitals today require the installation of an expensive infrastructure of antennas and receivers to triangulate the location of RFID-tagged equipment.

Aethon's system uses the robot's single antenna to track the location of tagged equipment and does not require that more equipment be installed, he noted. In addition, the Homer robot can read multiple third-party RFID tags, Zini said.

The company said it does not require hospitals to sign site licenses but instead offers per-tag pricing.