

Meet "Frances" the efficient lab courier

ROBOT IS NAMED FOR RETIREE WHO GAVE 48 YEARS' SERVICE



For 48 years, Frances Walczak performed the vital function of distributing specimens to various busy laboratory sections at Christiana Care.

When she retired, some say, she left part of her spirit, embodied within a robot.

No, this isn't a story taken from the "The Twilight Zone." Rather, it's a reality that demonstrates how advanced technology can fill a void. The SpeciMinder, a small-scale, mobile robotic device, has adroitly assumed Walczak's important function within Christiana Care.

"We named the robot 'Frances,' in her honor," says Administrative Director of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Cheryl Katz.

Improved staff efficiency

The recently acquired robot wheels around the department, efficiently delivering specimens the way Walczak once did. "Efficient specimen delivery is vital, because our laboratory is so large," explains Katz. "The specimens come into a central location and then need to be distributed. Without 'Frances,' staff in the central location that do the actual specimen registration and processing had to leave their workstations to deliver specimens to other areas."

That led to problems, relates Katz. "If specimens don't get delivered in a timely manner, or if incoming specimens aren't rapidly accessioned, results may be delayed. We needed to change the workflow in this area. The robot helps us accomplish that."



Medical Technologist Deborah Notte gives "Frances" another job to do. The robot is a key member of the Pathology and Laboratory Medicine team that improves efficiency in the delivery of specimens.