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FACULTY OF ENGINEERING

DEPARTMENT OF SYSTEMS ENGINEERING

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN AUTONOMOUS ROBOT FOR MEDICAL SUPPLY DELIVERY IN DYNAMIC HOSPITAL ENVIRONMENTS USING ROS

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

We, **Precious Michael** and **Olajide Ibitoye**, declare that this project titled *"Design and Development of an Autonomous Robot for Medical Supply Delivery in Dynamic Hospital Environments Using ROS"* and the work presented in it are our own. We confirm that:

(a) This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a B.Sc. degree at the University of Lagos.

(b) Where any part of this work has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification, it has been clearly stated.

(c) Any published work of others has been appropriately cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, there has been an increase in the mortality rate of hospital patients due to short-handed workers. Hospitals are understaffed, and the few available are usually overworked, leading to exhaustion and mental breakdown of healthcare workers. This inherently results in inefficient care and the death of patients.

Among its various proposed use cases, this project aims to reduce the physical strain on healthcare workers by reducing their workload. Using an automated delivery system, routine and minute tasks like delivering medical supplies, meals, laboratory samples, laundry, reminders, etc. will be carried out. This should allow nurses and doctors to better spend their time doing more hands-on tasks.

The Medical Supply Delivery System (MSDS) seeks to harness the power of AI to create an autonomous robot model that integrates Algorithms, Odometry, Path Planning, Navigation, Mapping, and Localization powered by various sensors.

This delivery system will be suitable for dynamic hospital environments, focusing on real-time navigation, obstacle avoidance, efficient task scheduling and execution.

Keywords: Robotics, Systems Engineering, Optimization, Automation, ROS, Autonomous

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Contents

Declaration of Authorship **i**

Abstract **ii**

Acknowledgements **iii**

Acronyms and Abbreviations **xii**

Nomenclature **xiii**

1 INTRODUCTION **1**
1.1 Background 1
1.2 Problem Statement 2
1.3 Aims and Objectives 3
1.4 Research Questions 4
1.5 Significance of the Study 6
1.6 Scope and Delimitations of Study 6
1.6.1 Scope 6
1.6.2 Delimitations 7
1.7 Hypothesis and Validation Approach 8
1.8 Definition of Terms 9

2 LITERATURE REVIEW **10**
2.1 Introduction 10
2.1.1 Overview and Significance 10
2.1.2 Purpose of the Review 10
2.1.3 Scope of the Review 11
2.2 Historical Development of Medical Robots 11
2.2.1 Early Development 11
2.2.2 Evolution of Technological Capabilities 13
2.3 Technological Advancements and Innovation in Healthcare Robotics 13
2.3.1 Core Technological Developments 13
2.3.2 Impact of Technological Advancements 14

2.4 System Architecture and Framework for Autonomous Robots in Healthcare . . 14
2.4.1 Overview of System Architectures 15
2.4.2 Human-Supervisory Control Systems 15
2.4.3 Integration with Hospital Systems 16
2.4.4 Challenges in System Architecture 16
2.4.5 Case Studies and Applications 16
2.5 Integration of Autonomous Robots in Medical Supply Delivery 18
2.5.1 Overview of Autonomous Robots in Medical Supply Delivery 18
2.5.2 System Connectivity and Interoperability 19
2.5.3 Implementation Strategies for Autonomous Medical Robots 19
2.5.4 Collaboration with Healthcare Professionals 20
2.5.5 Overcoming Integration Barriers for Autonomous Robots in Healthcare 21
2.5.6 Case Studies on Autonomous Medical Supply Delivery 21
2.6 Adaptation and Learning Capabilities of Autonomous Robots in Healthcare . . 22
2.6.1 Adaptive Navigation and Decision Making 23
2.6.2 Learning from Patient Interactions 23
2.6.3 Integration with Evolving Healthcare Protocols 24
2.6.4 Challenges in Adaptation 24
2.7 SAFETY AND HUMAN-ROBOT INTERACTION IN HEALTHCARE 24
2.7.1 Establishing Safety Standards 24
2.7.2 Designing for Human-Centric Safety 25
2.7.3 Interactive Safety Measures 25
2.7.4 Training and Protocol Development 26
2.8 Operational Challenges and Solutions for Autonomous Robots in Healthcare . . 26
2.8.1 Navigating Complex Environments 27
2.8.2 Integration with Healthcare Systems 27
2.8.3 Human-Robot Interaction 27
2.8.4 Reliability and Maintenance 28
2.9 Using ROS for Autonomous Robots in Medical Supply Delivery 28
2.9.1 System Architecture and Fleet Management in ROS-Based Medical Supply Delivery 29
2.9.2 Navigation and Path Planning Strategies in ROS-Based Hospital Environments 29
2.9.3 Human-Robot Interaction and Safety Considerations 30
2.9.4 Simulation and Testing of ROS-Based Medical Delivery Robots 30
2.9.5 Challenges and Future Directions in ROS-Based Medical Supply Delivery 30
2.10 Engineering Design Process for Autonomous Robots in Medical Supply Delivery Using ROS 31
2.10.1 Design Methodologies in Medical Robotics 31

2.10.2 System Architecture and Functional Components 32
2.10.3 Safety Considerations in Medical Robot Design 32
2.10.4 Optimization of Control Systems and Navigation 32
2.10.5 Challenges and Future Directions 33
2.11 Ethical and Regulatory Considerations of Autonomous Robots in Healthcare . . 33
2.11.1 Ethical Implications 33
2.11.2 Regulatory Landscape 34
2.11.3 Impact on Healthcare Practice 34
2.11.4 Considerations for Policy Development 34
2.11.5 Future Directions 34
2.12 Novelty and Research Gap in Autonomous Robots for Healthcare 35
2.12.1 Recent Innovations 35
2.12.2 Identifying Research Gaps in Autonomous Robots for Healthcare 35
2.13 Conclusion and Future Directions for Autonomous Robots in Healthcare 39
2.13.1 Summary of Key Findings 39
2.13.2 Implications for Future Research 39
2.13.3 Advancements in Robot Capabilities 39
2.13.4 Regulatory and Ethical Frameworks 39

3 METHODOLOGY **41**
3.1 Engineering Design Process (EDP) 41
3.2 Problem Identification 42
3.3 Research and Background Study 42
3.4 Specify Requirements 43
3.4.1 Functional Requirements 43
3.4.2 Non-functional Requirements 44
3.4.3 Technical Requirements 44
3.4.4 Design Constraints and Limitations 45
3.4.5 Criteria for Success 46
3.5 Brainstorm and Conceptualize Solutions 46
3.5.1 Locomotion Systems 46
3.5.2 Software Frameworks 47
3.5.3 Mapping Techniques 48
3.5.4 Human-Robot Interaction Alternatives 48
3.6 Select Best Design 49
3.6.1 Selection of Locomotion System 49
3.6.2 Selection of Software Framework 49
3.6.3 Selection of Mapping & Localization Technique 50
3.6.4 Selection of Human-Robot Interaction Method 50

3.6.5 Modes of Operation . . . 50
3.6.6 Component Selection and Justifications . . . 51
3.6.7 Material Selection and Justifications . . . 53
3.6.8 Environmental Impact Assessment . . . 53
3.7 Detailed Design and Prototyping . . . 54
3.7.1 Mechanical Design . . . 54
3.7.2 Electrical Design . . . 55
3.7.3 Process Flow . . . 55
3.7.4 Software Architecture . . . 58
3.7.5 ROS Based Architecture . . . 58
System Architecture . . . 59
Safety Chain . . . 59
ROS2 Components . . . 60
3.7.6 Kinematics Model . . . 63
3.7.7 Mathematical Modeling of the Autonomous Robot System . . . 65
Path Planning - SmacPlanner2D . . . 65
Regulated Pure Pursuit Controller (Path Following) . . . 66
DWB Trajectory Sampling Model . . . 67
3.8 Experimental Plan . . . 67
3.9 Testing & Iteration . . . 68

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 70
4.1 Introduction . . . 70
4.2 Analysis . . . 70
4.2.1 System Overview . . . 70
4.2.2 Mapping and Navigation . . . 71
4.2.3 Task Scheduling and Execution . . . 73
4.2.4 Recipient Identification . . . 77
4.2.5 Performance Metrics . . . 79
Navigational Accuracy . . . 82
Delivery Success Rate . . . 83
Recipient Verification . . . 83
Averge Delivery Time . . . 84
Battery Endurance . . . 85
Payload Capacity . . . 85
Obstacle Avoidance . . . 86
4.2.6 Mechanical and Electrical Stability . . . 88
4.3 Discussion . . . 90
4.4 Summary of Chapter Four . . . 91

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS **92**
5.1 Introduction 92
5.2 Summary of the Project 92
5.3 Contributions of the Project 93
5.4 Limitations of the Project 94
5.5 Conclusion 94
5.6 Recommendations 95
5.6.1 Technical Recommendations 95
5.6.2 System and Software Enhancements 96
5.6.3 Deployment Recommendations 96
5.6.4 Future Research Directions 96
5.7 Summary of Chapter Five 96

REFERENCES **98**

A APPENDIX **104**
A.1 Project Source Code and Configurations 104
A.2 Project Demonstration and Testing Video 104

List of Figures

1.1 Total number of reported infections and deaths in WHO regions Source: (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2020) . . . 3

2.1 Schematic Diagram of HelpMate (J. M. Evans, 1994) . . . 12
2.2 Timeline of Medical Robotics Development (1990–2000) . . . 12
2.3 Timeline of Medical Robotics Development (2010–2020) . . . 13
2.4 Architecture of an Autonomous Medical Robot . . . 15
2.5 ROS-Based Navigation System for Medical Delivery Robots . . . 19
2.6 Learning from Patient Interactions in Autonomous Medical Robots . . . 23

3.1 Prototype 1 . . . 54
3.2 Prototype 2 . . . 55
3.3 Flow Chart Showing Process Flow . . . 57
3.4 Mecanum Wheel . . . 63
3.5 Motions of Omnidirectional Platform . . . 63

4.1 Generated 2D occupancy map from the robot's LiDAR and odometry . . . 72
4.2 Facility maps interface showing live robot mapping and map management tools 73
4.3 Active delivery task interface . . . 74
4.4 Queued delivery tasks . . . 75
4.5 Completed delivery tasks with timestamps . . . 75
4.6 Missed delivery tasks showing delivery errors . . . 76
4.7 New task creation interface . . . 76
4.8 Weekly delivery statistics showing task distribution . . . 77
4.9 Patient management system showing patient-tag linkage . . . 78
4.10 RFID tag management dashboard . . . 78
4.11 BLE beacon management dashboard . . . 79
4.12 System overview dashboard . . . 80
4.13 Robot fleet management dashboard . . . 80
4.14 Diagnostics and logs dashboard . . . 81
4.15 Delivery success rate comparison between preliminary and expected results . . 87
4.16 Battery endurance vs payload comparison for preliminary and expected results 88
4.17 Debug console showing IMU sensor data . . . 89

4.18 Manual control panel for robot operation 89
4.19 Robot settings and configuration interface 90

List of Tables

2.1 Gap Analysis Matrix Linking Literature Limitations to MSDS Contributions . . 36

3.1 Example DWA Trajectory Scoring 67
3.2 Evaluation Scenarios, Design, and Primary KPIs with Pass Criteria 68

4.1 Preliminary vs Expected Performance Metrics 82
4.2 Baseline vs. Tuned Navigation and Reliability (Experiment E1) 83
4.3 Priority Scheduling Performance (Experiment E4) 84
4.4 Energy Efficiency and Endurance Metrics (Experiment E3) 85
4.5 Safety and Fault Injection Evaluation (E5) 86

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
DC	Direct Current
ML	Machine Learning
Wh	Watt-hour
API	Application Programming Interface
BLE	Bluetooth Low Energy
BMS	Battery Management System
DDS	Data Distribution Service
DWA	Dynamic Window Approach
DWB	Dynamic Window Band / DWA-based local planner
EDP	Engineering Design Process
EKF	Extended Kalman Filter
GUI	Graphical User Interface
HRI	Human–Robot Interaction
IMU	Inertial Measurement Unit
IoT	Internet of Things
IQR	Interquartile Range
PID	Proportional–Integral–Derivative
ROS	Robot Operating System
SBC	Single Board Computer
AMCL	Adaptive Monte Carlo Localization
MSDS	Medical Supply Delivery System
Nav2	Navigation 2 Framework
RFID	Radio-Frequency Identification
ROS2	Robot Operating System 2
SLAM	Simultaneous Localization and Mapping
URDF	Unified Robot Description Format
LIDAR	Light Detection and Ranging
E-Stop	Emergency Stop

NOMENCLATURE

v	Linear velocity of robot (m/s)
ω	Angular velocity of robot (rad/s)
r	Wheel radius (m)
L	Distance between front and rear wheels (m)
W	Distance between left and right wheels (m)
θ	Robot heading angle (rad)
$\dot{\theta}$	Angular velocity (rad/s)
ω_i	Angular velocity of wheel i (rad/s)
P	Power consumption (W)
η	System efficiency
E	Energy consumed (Wh)
d	Travel distance (m)
t	Task completion time (s)
ϵ	Localization error
x, y	Robot position in global frame (m)
v_x, v_y	Robot velocity in body frame (m/s)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the applications of autonomous mobile systems is hospital delivery. Materials like medication, lab samples, laundry, and meals are moved around daily in the hospital. While solutions have been developed to aid hospital logistics, they are not exactly the most flexible and do not take into account environmental complexity like narrow corridors, older buildings, overcrowding, and more. Due to these complexities, some materials are still delivered manually by the workers.

This chapter introduces the project topic and explains the motivation and importance of the problem being addressed.

1.1 Background

Over time, robotics has transformed healthcare by addressing issues like accuracy, productivity, time management, inefficient distribution of materials, risk of infection, etc. Hospitals, in particular, face constant challenges like staff shortages, increasing workloads and the need for timely delivery of medical supplies. Studies have shown that hospital staff can spend up to 4-16% of their working hours walking or transporting items around (Yen et al., 2018). This time could otherwise be devoted to patient care and clinical duties. Delays in medication delivery and exposure to infectious areas also contribute to health risks especially during outbreaks.

Robots in healthcare generally fall into two categories - those assisting individuals, such as sufferers of the disease, and those helping in the overall systems such as pharmacies and hospitals (“Robot”, 2024). Examples include companion robots, which engage emotionally with patients, laboratory robots found in labs to automate processes or assist lab technicians in completing routine tasks, and robotic prosthetics which provide their wearers with life-like limb functionality (“Medical robot”, 2024).

Medical Delivery robots, such as TUG by Aethon and RelayRx by Relay Robotics are designed to transport items such as medications, meals, and equipment within healthcare facilities, relieving staff from repetitive tasks. However, most of the existing solutions usually depend on the pre-programmed layout of the environment and might struggle to adapt to dynamic environments with unpredictable changes.

This study aims to address the limitations of these current systems by integrating real-time decision-making capabilities and flexible navigation, making them more suitable for dynamic hospital environments.

1.2 Problem Statement

With the rise of technology in the healthcare sector, a lot of issues became imperative to address. Key Issues include:

1. Workload on Health Care Workers: The healthcare sector is generally a constantly changing environment with the working conditions becoming increasingly demanding and stressful. This high-stress work environment results in high turnover rates, low job satisfaction, and absenteeism due to sickness, ultimately affecting patient care and worker well-being (Holland, Kingston, McCarthy, Armstrong, O'Dwyer, et al., 2021; Portoghese et al., 2014). Persistent understaffing actively contributes to burnout, emergency room overcrowding, medication errors, missed patient care, and patient dissatisfaction. Studies show that for every 5% increase in understaffed shifts, there is a 1% increase in the mortality rate. In comparison, a 5% increase in registered nurses' hours reduces the mortality rate by 2% (Rochefort et al., 2020). The need for healthcare workers to focus on higher-priority tasks arose.

2. Error-Prone Delivery Schedules: Traditional delivery systems were heavily reliant on human staff and therefore prone to inefficiencies like delays or human error. In understaffed hospitals, these systems become more susceptible to errors, risking patients (Johansson et al., 2019; Pape et al., 2005).

3. 24/7 Availability: Unlike human workers, robots can continuously operate without exhaustion. The study found that long working hours are mostly responsible for about one-third of the estimated work-related burden of disease. The study concludes that working 55 or more hours per week correlates with an estimated 35% higher risk of a stroke and a 17% higher risk of heart disease, compared to working 35-40 hours a week.

4. Reduction of Human Interaction: During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were several cases of worker infection as a result of exposure to infected patients. By May 2020, 152,888 healthcare workers had been reported to have been infected with COVID-19,

with 130 countries reporting at least one case of this (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2020). Figure 1.1 shows the statistics of infections and deaths of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

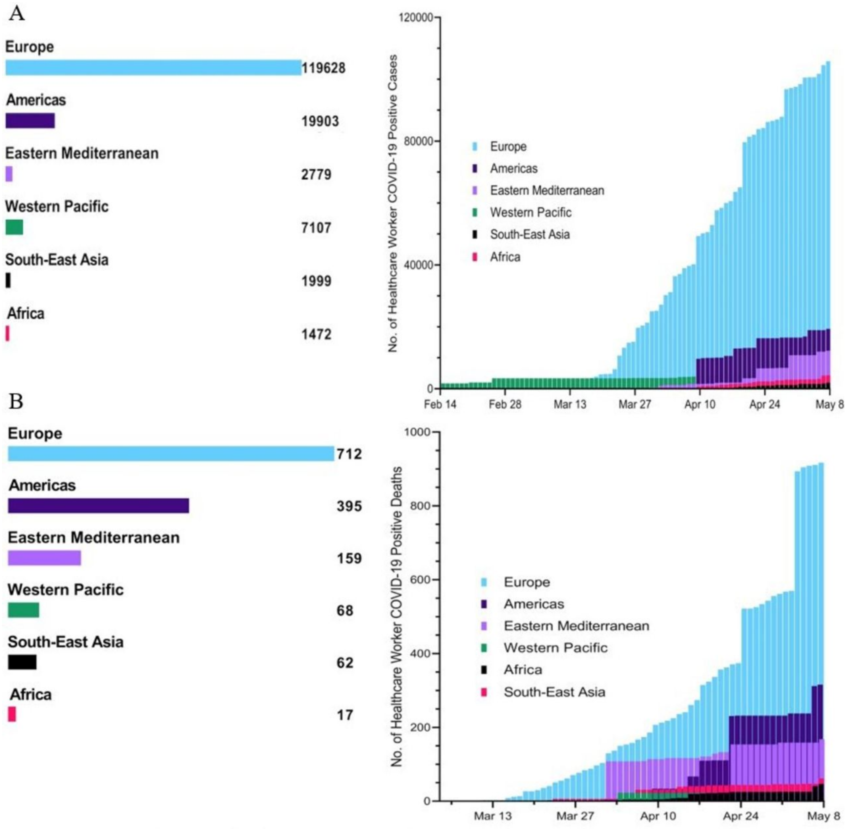


Figure 1.1: Total number of reported infections and deaths in WHO regions Source: (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2020)

These issues underlined the need to minimize human interactions unless necessary during severe infection cases.

While existing systems attempted to solve some of these issues, they struggled with task scheduling and adaptability in dynamic environments. These issues called for a more reliable and efficient system. This study aims to develop a reliable autonomous delivery robot that could navigate unpredictable hospital environments, ensuring accuracy, and reducing the risk of infection, exposure, and strain on healthcare workers.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

This project aims to design and develop an autonomous robot using ROS for delivering medical supplies in dynamic hospital environments, focusing on real-time navigation, obstacle avoidance, and efficient task scheduling.

The objectives of this research include:

1. To conduct a comprehensive literature review on autonomous robots in healthcare, focusing on navigation, task scheduling, and obstacle avoidance by analyzing existing research and technologies used in hospital environments.

2. To design and develop an autonomous medical delivery robot by utilizing ROS and incorporating key components such as navigation, task scheduling, and human-robot interaction specific to hospital settings.

3. To implement real-time navigation and localization by using SLAM algorithms, enabling the robot to map and navigate dynamic indoor environments with changing obstacles.

4. To integrate obstacle detection and avoidance systems by employing sensor fusion techniques such as LiDAR, depth cameras, and ultrasonic sensors to enhance the robot's ability to navigate in crowded hospital corridors.

5. To develop an intelligent task scheduling system by implementing optimization algorithms that prioritize delivery tasks based on urgency and traffic conditions within the hospital.

6. To incorporate human-robot interaction features by designing a user interface, including voice command, and web or mobile application control, that allows medical staff to request and monitor deliveries in real-time.

7. To test and validate the system's performance by conducting experiments in a simulated hospital environment to evaluate the robot's navigation accuracy, obstacle avoidance, task efficiency, and overall reliability.

1.4 Research Questions

The basic challenges encountered in modern healthcare environments brought up these fundamental questions that served as a driver for this research project. Three questions, crucial to our investigation, of healthcare facility operations aim to optimize them while minimizing patient care and staff well-being.

1. **How can an autonomous robot system be designed to operate in dynamic environments while performing tasks?**

   This question goes from technical to practical to understand how to develop a robust autonomous system to navigate hospital environments that are not predictable. The answer to this will be determined by looking at several navigation algorithms, particularly those that enable the robot to react as quickly as possible to the introduction of new obstacles or a change in its path. Solutions (like SLAM) will be tested to see how accurately and fast the robot can build and adjust a map of its surroundings. However, to achieve this goal, it must be ensured that the robot not only moves efficiently but also does not disrupt anyone in the hospital for safety reasons.

2. **To what extent can the robot be able to localize and navigate in the dynamic hospital environments through real-time mapping, how accurately and efficiently?**

   This question assesses the performance of the robot in navigation using metrics like path accuracy (¡ than 10 cm drift over 10 m), obstacle response (less than 2 s), task completion rate (more than 95 percent). This is to establish whether localization through the use of SLAM can be used to stabilize the operation even under changing indoor conditions.

3. **How can you develop various task scheduling and prioritization methods to satisfy urgent and demand medical supply delivery in the weight of time?**

   The need for medical supply deliveries in hospitals is big and it spans from urgent to not urgent items to be delivered. To answer this question, it is necessary to understand task scheduling and prioritization algorithms that can accommodate the hospital's needs and supply things at the right places at the right time. It will study optimization algorithms where the robot can decide based on factors such as urgency, location, and even macro, like the prediction of congestion of that hospital. The goal is to create a system that equips the robot to do so effectively, improves hospital efficiency, and relieves healthcare workers from their logistical burden.

4. **Will a priority based scheduling system decrease the time of urgent tasks by at least 30 percent, relative to a simple FIFO system?**

   The effect of smart scheduling on the efficiency of delivery is measured in this question. The metrics are urgent-task tardiness, on-time delivery percentage, and penalties of non-urgent delay, which prove that prioritization has a significant impact on time-sensitive supply deliveries.

5. **How does the implementation of an autonomous delivery system affect worker satisfaction, patient care quality, and overall hospital operational efficiency?**

   This question addresses how autonomous systems will be implemented in healthcare settings from the human and operational perspectives. The objective is to determine how automation reduces non-clinical tasks, which in turn affects healthcare workers' ability to concentrate on patient care, job satisfaction, and the quality of healthcare delivery. Measures that will be used to evaluate it comprise average time which staff saves on a single delivery cycle (target is 25% and above), consistency of the completion of the task, and the rate of decreased manual intervention (2 or less interventions per hour).

1.5 Significance of the Study

The development of an autonomous robot for delivering medical supplies in hospitals has a broader significance in healthcare, robotics, and society.

The delivery of supplies is often managed by healthcare workers who also have to juggle this with their primary responsibilities and tasks. Studies show that nurses spend approximately 30% of their time on logistics and delivery tasks rather than direct patient care. This contributes to understaffed hospitals, an increased workload for healthcare workers, and a reduction in the quality of patient care. By automating these processes, the quality of patient care, inherently the hospital efficiency increases. Additionally, the safety of healthcare workers will improve, as their workload is reduced and their exposure to infected patients is minimized.

Beyond the healthcare sector, this project can be fine-tuned to suit other workspaces such as warehouses, airports, etc. This research project will advance the field of robotics by laying a foundation to address challenges related to autonomous navigation in unpredictable environments with frequent movement of people.

For society, this project encourages public trust in hospitals, as patients get prioritized care. It builds up patients' satisfaction and can contribute to the hospital's reputation for quality care.

1.6 Scope and Delimitations of Study

1.6.1 Scope

- *Navigation and Path Planning in real-time*: Navigation algorithms like SLAM enable robots to run in the dynamic hospital setting with unexpected obstacles.
- *Task Scheduling and Prioritization*: Creating a system for scheduling tasks that prioritize deliveries by urgency and location to minimize traffic and patient flow while maximizing the delivery efficiency of supplies.
- *Obstacle Detection and Avoidance*: Interfacing different sensors (LiDAR, cameras, ultrasonic) to make it aware of the obstacles in the environment in real-time and enable safe navigation through crowded corridors.
- *Human-Robot Interaction (HRI)*: Designing an interface to allow healthcare staff to ask for and monitor deliveries through voice commands or mobile apps.

- *Tracking and confirmations*: A means of having patients and other recipients identified to track and confirm deliveries.

1.6.2 Delimitations

While the project seeks to improve hospital logistics, there are still some limitations:

1. *Resource Constraints*:
   Due to budget restrictions, the prototype may lack high-end sensors (e.g. 3D LIDAR) and high-end hardware, which negates the robot's accurate navigation and response time in complex environments.

2. *Indoor Navigation Only*:
   The robot is only meant to be used indoors and will not be able to run in outdoor hospital spaces like parking lots or gardens.

3. *Fixed Medical Supply Handling*:
   The medical supplies will be carried by the robot itself, but the robot will not include an automated dispensing mechanism.

4. *Limited Interaction Capabilities*:
   The robot will not interact with humans in an advanced human-robot interaction beyond basic voice notifications. Conversational AI or patient engagement features are not available, other than predefined messages.

5. *Restricted Real World Testing*:
   Instead of testing the robot in live hospital settings, the robot's initial testing will be in controlled environments. It restricts the capacity to provide a complete simulation of dynamic hospital conditions, for instance, high human traffic or frequent layout changes.

6. *Privacy and Ethical Concerns*:
   The privacy concerns of implementing patient recognition features may limit the robot's ability to interact directly with patients unless other data security measures are implemented.

7. *Power and Autonomy Constraints*:
   Continuous operation can be limited by battery life, requiring the robot to periodically recharge. This reduces efficiency, especially during peak demand periods.

This project aims at the development of a foundational prototype that can be further expanded and optimized with further resources and real hospital testing.

1.7 Hypothesis and Validation Approach

In this study, the research is guided by a series of hypotheses which connects the operational performance of the robot with quantifiable results in terms of accuracy in navigation, efficiency in schedule and safety to humans. Every hypothesis will be tested by means of controlled experiments and quantitative performance measures that are in Chapter 3.

1. *Hypothesis 1:*
   Combining real-time obstacle detection and adaptive path planning will enhance the success rate of the navigation by at least 30 percent in comparison to static route planning.
   Validation Method: Compare time to complete task, the count of collisions, and path diversion in both the case of a static and dynamic obstacle based on measures like the success rate (percentage), and path efficiency (percentage increase).

2. *Hypothesis 2:*
   The use of priority-conscious task scheduling will cut the time of urgent deliveries by at least 25% and the overall throughput of the system.
   Validation Approach: Measure delivery times, waiting time of tasks, and compliance with wait times on the basis of priority levels using the FIFO (baseline) and the priority-based scheduling algorithm.

3. *Hypothesis 3:*
   The IMU/encoder fusion using Extended Kalman Filters will decrease localization drift by at least 40 percent as compared to localization using odometry alone.
   Validation Approach: The validation method will measure the positional error through the mean square error between the approximated and ground-truth poses in duplicated navigation experiments.

4. *Hypothesis 4:*
   The safety measures included in the robot, including emergency stops and proximity detection, will guarantee no collisions and a minimum distance of 0.3 m between humans and the robot, in human-robot interaction tests.
   Validation Approach: Experimentally conduct proximity-based experiments in controlled hospital-like settings and measure stop latency and minimum distance measures.

The hypotheses will then be tested using a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) such as the success rate, delay time, distance error, and safety margins, which will serve to either validate or falsify the assumptions in the realistic operating conditions.

1.8 Definition of Terms

1. *Autonomous Robot:* A system or machine capable of operating without direct human intervention.
2. *Logistics:* The management of how resources are acquired, stored, and transported to their final destination.
3. *Dynamic Environment:* A constantly changing environment where conditions are unpredictable like objects and people constantly moving.
4. *Robot Operating System (ROS):* An open-source framework that provides software tools and libraries for robotic applications such as facilitating communication between different components of a robot system.
5. *Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM):* A technique that allows robots to determine their position within a given environment while building a map of it.
6. *Obstacle Avoidance:* The ability to detect obstacles and navigate around them.
7. *Motion or Path Planning:* The process of finding the best or optimal route to transfer an object from one point to another.
8. *Navigation:* The process of monitoring and controlling movement from one place to another.
9. *Real-Time Processing:* A method of analyzing data as it is received.
10. *Microcontroller:* A small integrated circuit used to control specific components in electronic systems.
11. *Single Board Computer (SBC):* A small and complete computer built on one single circuit board.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Healthcare delivery has experienced an essential transformation because of medical service robots and these devices contribute to operational productivity. This paper examines robotic technology's potential to transform patient care along with medical care logistics whereas it also explores robotic integration within healthcare systems. This thesis examines how these technologies developed for healthcare usage and provides present applications so scientists can forecast their future progression in medical sectors. This review demonstrates a complete overview of the medical technology background combined with its current practices and an examination of projected future trajectories in the healthcare domain.

2.1.1 Overview and Significance

Healthcare institutions rely on autonomous robots because they make essential improvements to medical services and clinical management procedures. These robots administer regular administrative tasks, assisting medical care activities to lower medical personnel workloads and enhance medical treatment precision. This review explores how robots affect healthcare environments through their operational effects, required technological components, and deployment challenges.

2.1.2 Purpose of the Review

This literature review attempts to compile and summarize the most recent findings on how autonomous robots have been used in healthcare environments, diagnosis and knowledge gaps as well as future lines of inquiry. This conversation is needed to understand how robotic technology can further develop to be put into place in healthcare systems in a way that further improves patient experiences and service delivery.

2.1.3 Scope of the Review

This paper covers the history of autonomous robots in healthcare, the progress in their technological capabilities, and the way that they have been introduced to clinical settings. Although the review briefly considers some uses of these robots, an in-depth analysis of some operational difficulties, safety problems, and moral problems will be left to other sections.

2.2 Historical Development of Medical Robots

2.2.1 Early Development

The reason for the emergence of robotic assistance in healthcare was the requirement for better surgical precision and efficiency of medical procedures. In the early 1980s, robotics in healthcare was almost experimental, and it was used to enhance the capabilities of human surgeons in complex procedures. Among the most significant events that occurred during this period was the introduction of the PUMA 560, a robotic arm that was used for the first time in 1985 during a stereotactic brain biopsy, the first use of robotic assistance in surgery (Ginoya et al., 2021). The outcome of this breakthrough would enable more surgical automation and robotic precision improvement.

By the 1990s, the field of medical robotics was already quite developed and ROBODOC, a robotic system that was designed exclusively for orthopedic surgeries, was developed. The first use of robotic system used in total hip replacement procedures in 1992 was ROBODOC, a major step toward autonomous robotic assistance in surgery, which was able to achieve unprecedented precision in bone milling operations (Ginoya et al., 2021). Later, after refinement of the ROBODOC system with additional safety mechanisms, including force sensing on all axes, the now improved surgeon control over robotic actions during procedures was possible.

In the late 1990s, the field of autonomous robotics had made great strides, especially in the area of medical supply delivery inside hospitals. During this period trackless robotic couriers such as the HelpMate robot, transporting pharmacy supplies and patient records autonomously were explored. A sensor-based motion planning algorithm allows the early autonomous mobile robot the HelpMate robot to navigate dynamically in complex hospital environments. A schematic of the HelpMate robot and the components of the system that enabled its advanced functionality is provided in Figure 2.1 (J. M. Evans, 1994).

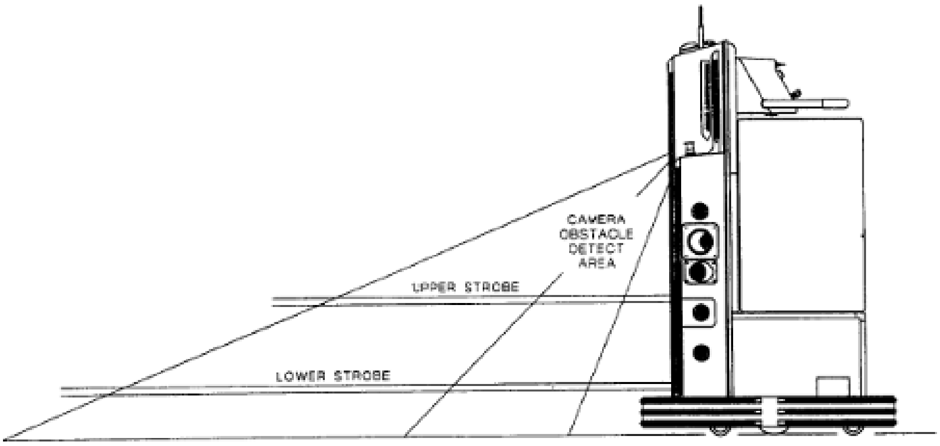


Figure 2.1: Schematic Diagram of HelpMate (J. M. Evans, 1994)

This development led to the TUG Robot, an autonomous transport system, through infrared and ultrasonic sensors used for real-time navigation, obstacle avoidance, and safe medication transport.

Autonomous medical supply robots were first officially introduced in mainstream hospital operations in the 2000s. Panasonic's HOSPI systems, which were developed in 1998 and refined over the years, allowed hospitals to automate the supply chain management, medication delivery, and secure medical logistics, thereby reducing the burden of healthcare professionals and ensuring timely and error-free deliveries (Ginoya et al., 2021), underscoring the transformative impact of robotics in healthcare logistics, as chronicled in Figure 2.2.

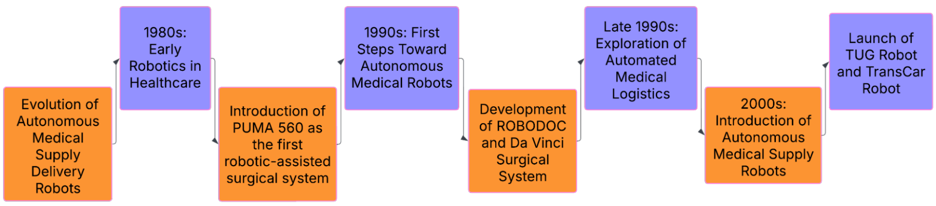


Figure 2.2: Timeline of Medical Robotics Development (1990–2000)

The developments in autonomous hospital logistics in the disillusioned years of 2010 were further spearheaded by the integration of robotics, powered by AI, and the Robot Operating System (ROS) as shown in Figure 2.3. In this age, robots became real-time data processing augmented Automated Mobile Robots (AMRs) with SLAM data processing and predictive analytics to make optimized route planning and scientific medical delivery possible (Thamrongaphichartkul et al., 2020). These innovations resulted in the emergence of modern AI-driven fleet management systems that enable hospitals to use multiple robots working in collaboration in dynamic healthcare environments.

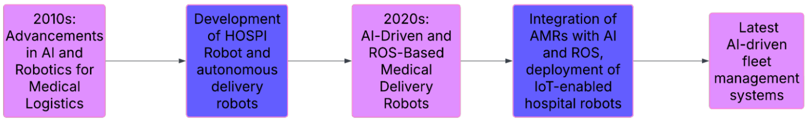


Figure 2.3: Timeline of Medical Robotics Development (2010–2020)

2.2.2 Evolution of Technological Capabilities

The authors (Aggarwal et al., 2019) argue that medical robot complexity and utilization domains have become more refined because of technological development. The integration of ROS (Robot Operating System) served as a critical framework that enabled the transition to different medical applications for self-operated medical supply distribution. The requirement of complex sensory and navigation systems for robots to operate in hospital environments was achieved through ROS.

Next, these systems were further refined to deal with some challenges in healthcare logistics, for example, to overcome the busy hospital corridors and safely interact with patients and staff. Using the advancements in machine learning and artificial intelligence in ROS, these robots were able to increase operational efficiency by real-time data processing and autonomous decision-making (Chawla, 2022).

2.3 Technological Advancements and Innovation in Healthcare Robotics

In this section, the basic technology improvements used to greatly enhance autonomous robot capabilities and features in medical settings are explored.

2.3.1 Core Technological Developments

Healthcare automation has benefited most from current developments in robotics together with artificial intelligence (AI) systems which enabled the advancement of autonomous robots. Such core technological developments include the implementation of hospital patient sample-carrying Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMRs) in hospital logistics applications. These robots demonstrated automated precision docking abilities which allowed them to perform battery charge operations and other charging tasks. Vongbunyong et al. (2021) established that technological innovations boost both operational efficiency and critical medical task accuracy in healthcare settings.

AI implementations in autonomous robots provide the equipment with enhanced data processing abilities which result in more competent decision-making and operational efficiency. According to Bacik et al. (2017), automated guided vehicles used in hospital logistics now operate through the most recent software stacks for simultaneous localization and navigation.

2.3.2 Impact of Technological Advancements

Advances in healthcare technologies have substantial effects on various healthcare elements. According to Dasari et al. (2024a) hospital robots used for patient care combined with logistics functions ease medical personnel labor. Medical robots handle official tasks which allows healthcare personnel to dedicate more time to treating patients and maximize healthcare resources for better delivery.

Chiu et al. (2020) illustrate the outstanding effects robotic technologies produce in procedures that benefit medical patients. The implementation of modern technology advances medical robots through enhanced detection models, including improved object detection for embedded systems which leads to higher quality care for patients.

2.4 System Architecture and Framework for Autonomous Robots in Healthcare

A healthcare robotics system architecture functions as an organized framework that merges hardware with software elements together with sensors and communication systems for maintaining continuous medical facility operations. Main components include:

- Sensor data collected from the Perception Layer enables map development for localization needs.
- Decision Layer carries out AI-based selection procedures through its algorithms.
- Motion control and actuator systems exist in the Control Layer.
- Hospital management systems can connect through the Communication Layer.

Figure 2.4 depicts the architecture of an autonomous medical robot and shows how perception, control, actuation, and communication systems cooperate to achieve autonomous hospital operations.

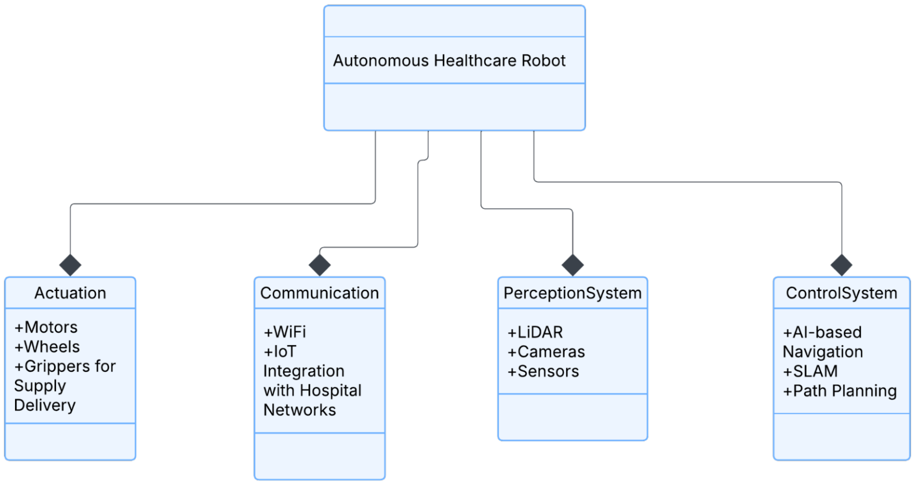


Figure 2.4: Architecture of an Autonomous Medical Robot

2.4.1 Overview of System Architectures

The healthcare-specific autonomous robot design adopts architecture mechanisms that achieve effortless integration as well as dependable operational efficiency for medical logistics and patient care. According to Thamrongaphichartkul et al. (2020), these systems depend on modular platforms to achieve flexible operation as robots serve different healthcare environments. According to Vongbunyong et al. (2021), autonomous mobile robots (AMRs) achieve better real-time monitoring alongside control and communication functions through their integration with Internet of Things (IoT) platforms specifically within hospital logistics systems.

2.4.2 Human-Supervisory Control Systems

The Human-Supervisory Distributed Robotic System Architecture allows human expertise to be flexible and robust to integrate into autonomous robotic systems. This layered control gives the capability for human operators to intervene at any time when the robots cannot handle situations and the robots can independently execute routine tasks (Tan et al., 2015). The coordination of individual robot-based tasks has augmented the hospital realm that hosts the multi-agent robotic system, like other hospitals.

2.4.3 Integration with Hospital Systems

Haleem et al. (2022) state that autonomous robots are increasingly integrated with Hospital Information Systems (HIS) and Electronic Health Records (EHRs) to ensure smooth operation. The integration allows robots to get and update patient data, manage logistics, and ensure timely delivery of medical supplies. Hellmund et al. (2016) also mention that a Robot Operating System (ROS) is widely used as a modular software framework for controlling robot navigation, task execution, and integrations.

2.4.4 Challenges in System Architecture

However, implementing autonomous robots in the healthcare domain is not as simple as it seems to be, because implementation in this domain is subject to many challenges.

- *Scalability:* An efficient control system is needed to avoid operational bottlenecks (Sayed et al., 2020) in managing multiple robots in various hospital departments.
- *Cybersecurity & Data Protection:* Since healthcare data is so sensitive, there needs to be robust encryption and authentication protocols to prevent unauthorized access (Batth et al., 2018)
- *Adaptability to Dynamic Environments:* In hospital settings with indeterminable environments like obstacles and patient movement, robots will require techniques to navigate efficiently such as Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) (Alami et al., 1998)

2.4.5 Case Studies and Applications

1. **IoT-Enabled Autonomous Mobile Robots for Hospital Logistics**

   In the case of autonomous mobile robots (AMRs) integrated with IoT in hospital logistics, Thamrongaphichartkul et al. (2020) conducted a case study. These AMRs were implemented to increase efficiency in the supply chain operations by remotely monitoring and controlling through a web-based IoT platform. The study reported:

   (a) Decrease of 40% in delivery errors resulting from automated tracking.

   (b) Improves operational efficiency in COVID-19 isolation wards by reducing the requirement for direct human contact in supply transportation.

   (c) Centralized control helps hospitals arrange route planning and minimize bottlenecks, enhancing fleet management.

2. **Human-Supervisory Distributed Robotic System for Healthcare Automation**

   In their work, Tan et al. (2015) present a multi-agent robotic system that was deployed in the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs hospitals for automated sterilization and logistics. The robots were designed with:

   (a) Human-in-the-loop supervision that allows healthcare workers to override commands when needed.

   (b) Multiple robots coordinated in an automated manner to optimally reduce logistics flow and reduce task completion time by 35%.

   (c) Support for large hospitals, for smooth operation in a dynamic environment.

   The results of the study show that the human supervisory model is a safe and efficient way to retain human control over critical tasks.

3. **Multi-Agent Navigation for Medical Delivery in COVID-19 Hospitals**

   This thesis investigated a Centralized Multi-Agent SLAM system running in COVID-19 field hospitals (Sayed et al., 2020). This system consisted of:

   (a) Hexapod robots for real-time mapping of hospital environments.

   (b) Six-wheeled robots for autonomous material transportation within intensive care units.

   (c) Task distribution systems centralized for less congestion and workflow boosting.

   The deployment led to:

   (a) A 50% increase in the efficiency of the hospital as a whole.

   (b) Reduction of infectious workplace environments for staff exposure.

   (c) AI-based SLAM models to optimize navigation and obstacle avoidance.

4. **Internet of Robotic Things (IoRT) for Intelligent Automation in Healthcare**

   In their research, Batth et al. (2018) studied the Internet of Robotic Things (IoRT) as a possible real-time-based decision-making framework in hospital logistics. Their case study demonstrated:

   (a) Integration of robotics into cloud-based analytics that can make predictive maintenance and optimize fleets.

   (b) Through the use of AI boosters, medical supply schedule delays are reduced by 28%.

   (c) Secure management of patient data, according to privacy regulations.

   The main finding demonstrates that IoRT facilitates hospital adaptability and decision-making in emergency dynamic situations.

5. **ROS-Based Open-Source Software for Autonomous Hospital Robots**

   Sanchez-Lopez et al. (2016) investigated AEROSTACK, an open-source, ROS-based robotic framework for multi-purpose hospital automation. The framework was applied in:

   (a) Surgical material handling, reducing human intervention.

   (b) Hands-free delivery of medication using mobile robotic assistance for nurses.

   (c) Infection control, improving tasks of autonomous disinfection.

   Hospitals implementing this framework observed:

   (a) A 30% increase in operational efficiency.

   (b) Reduction in task completion time due to AI-driven task prioritization.

   (c) Scalability improvement, since the ROS-based architecture supported custom modifications for different medical applications.

2.5 Integration of Autonomous Robots in Medical Supply Delivery

2.5.1 Overview of Autonomous Robots in Medical Supply Delivery

They have been widely implanted in hospitals for the automated delivery of medical supplies by autonomous robots. The hospital corridor is patrolled by these robots, they avoid obstacles, and they are in a position to deliver supplies to predetermined locations without human intervention. The integration process involves:

- Robots utilize Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) and GPS tracking to navigate rather efficiently (Prio, n.d.).
- *AI-Driven Navigation:* AI-driven navigation routes and avoids congestion (Takei et al., n.d.).
- Intuitive interfaces make it possible for staff to interact with robots as effortlessly as they can interact with each other (Cremer et al., 2016).

2.5.2 System Connectivity and Interoperability

Autonomous medical robots must have some level of connectivity and interoperability with hospital systems already in use. Successful integration requires:

- *Real-Time Supply Tracking:* Autonomous robots should communicate with the Electronic Health Records (EHRs) and inventory management systems to track supply deliveries in real-time (Pashangpour & Nejat, 2024).
- *The IoT-enabled robots* enable and improve remote monitoring and predictive maintenance (Batth et al., 2018).
- *Robot Operating System (ROS) based frameworks:* Such frameworks enable the use of standardized communication protocols (Sanchez-Lopez et al., 2016).

Figure 2.5 illustrates that the Robot Operating System (ROS) plays a crucial role in enabling multi-robot coordination, AI-driven route optimization, and real-time obstacle avoidance. ROS provides modular and scalable navigation frameworks, allowing hospitals to deploy multiple autonomous robots efficiently.

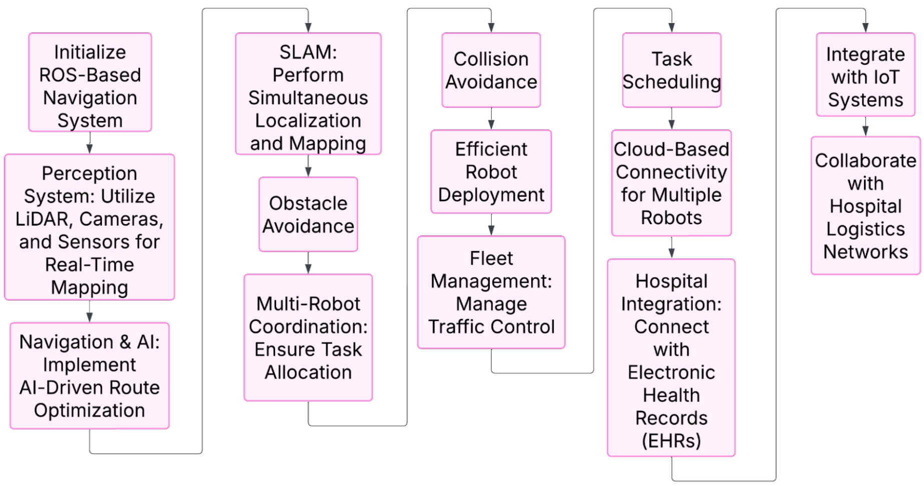


Figure 2.5: ROS-Based Navigation System for Medical Delivery Robots

2.5.3 Implementation Strategies for Autonomous Medical Robots

Strategic planning is necessary for implementing autonomous medical robotic deployment. Effective implementation strategies include:

1. *Pilot Testing and Gradual Deployment*

- Pilot programs allow hospitals to test the feasibility of autonomous robots.
- J. M. Evans (1994) explains that this approach helps maintain minimal disruption to current workflows.
- Gradual deployment enables staff adaptation and system refinement before full-scale implementation.

2. *AI-Powered Route Optimization*

   - Real-time hospital traffic patterns are analyzed by AI-driven models.
   - Routes are adjusted dynamically to ensure on-time delivery (Rahman et al., n.d.).
   - Takei et al. (n.d.) present Hamilton-Jacobi-based path planning for improving robot adaptability in crowded environments.

3. *Infrastructure Adaptation*

   - Automated door systems, robot-friendly elevators, and designated lanes can be required for hospitals to increase robot efficiency (Babu et al., n.d.).

2.5.4 Collaboration with Healthcare Professionals

It is important to have collaboration from healthcare professionals to succeed. Therefore, robots need to be designed to be complementary, but not replace, human workers.

1. *Training and Workforce Adaptation*

   - Human-robot interaction is made smooth by workshops and training sessions for hospital staff.
   - Interfaces that are easier to use increase adoption rates among non-technical healthcare professionals (Cremer et al., 2016).

2. *Human-Supervisory Models*

   - Human-in-the-loop supervision allows staff to intervene in critical situations to keep safety and reliability (Tan et al., 2015).

3. *Enhancing Patient Experience*

   - Integrating robotics into patient care reduces waiting times for supply deliveries and improves patient care.
   - Social robots powered by AI can communicate with patients and engage them in conversations (Pashangpour & Nejat, 2024).

2.5.5 Overcoming Integration Barriers for Autonomous Robots in Healthcare

The benefits, however, make the integration of autonomous robots into healthcare logistics challenging.

1. *Infrastructure Challenges*
   - Robot-compatible elevators, automated doors, and adequate charging stations are not present in many hospitals.
   - Solution: Retrofit hospital infrastructure to support autonomous navigation (Prio, n.d.).
2. *Regulatory and Ethical Concerns*
   - Hospital safety and data privacy regulations must be maintained by robotic systems.
   - Solution: Implement encryption of communication and restricted access to sensitive medical supplies (Prio, n.d.).
3. *Resistance from Healthcare Workers*
   - Resistance can occur due to fear of job displacement.
   - Solution: Position robots as assistive tools that supplement human labor rather than replace it (Cremer et al., 2016).
4. *High Initial Costs*
   - Hospitals face significant capital expenditure for autonomous robot deployment.
   - Solution: Adopt Robot-as-a-Service (RaaS) models to reduce upfront costs and improve financial flexibility (Pashangpour & Nejat, 2024).

2.5.6 Case Studies on Autonomous Medical Supply Delivery

1. **HelpMate Robot: Early Integration of Autonomous Couriers in Hospitals**
   System Features
   - 24-hour autonomous operation
   - Route optimization based on graph-based path planning
   - Multi-robot coordination for congestion management

- Radio-based communication for hospital infrastructure integration (J. M. Evans, 1994)

Impact

- Improved delivery efficiency and reduced workload for hospital staff

2. **Six-Wheeled Differential Drive Robot for Secure Medical Delivery**
   System Features

   - Differential drive design with six wheels
   - Password-protected storage compartments for secure medical deliveries
   - Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) and real-time localization
   - Motion planning for energy efficiency (Prio, n.d.)

   Impact

   - Enhanced security and reliability of medical supply delivery

3. **AI-Driven Mobile Medical Assistants**
   System Features

   - AI-based adaptive navigation for dynamic hospital environments
   - Automated charging stations for uninterrupted operation
   - Real-time task coordination with hospital staff (Hossain, 2023)

   Impact

   - Reduced human workload and improved hospital logistics

2.6 Adaptation and Learning Capabilities of Autonomous Robots in Healthcare

All Autonomous robots in healthcare and emergency response need to possess adaptive and learning capabilities to operate in their dynamic respective environments. The capability that they provide allows robots to autonomously navigate, learn from patient interaction, and account for changes in healthcare protocols, as well as adaptation.

2.6.1 Adaptive Navigation and Decision Making

In a complex hospital environment, such environments need real-time adaptation. In the last few years, SLAM algorithms have become indispensable for artificial spatial awareness in real-time robots. According to Ibrayev et al. (2024), autonomous navigating is made better with Given 3D LiDAR and Normal Distribution Transform (NDT) Matching for real-time mapping and obstacle avoidance. In addition, robots have to cope with environmental uncertainties (changes in light conditions, patient movement, and emergencies). It is also stressed in his research from the RoboSAPIENS project, that deep learning models should be integrated with navigation systems for decision-making to take place in a trustworthy manner under uncertainty so that the robot can adapt to unforeseen circumstances.

2.6.2 Learning from Patient Interactions

Despite this, autonomous robots must learn to intuitively react to human interactions and 'self-improve' to be in a position to offer useful contributions to patient care. In this work, Kim et al. (2024) propose a framework for LLMs to take on the natural roles of robotic health attendants for supporting adaptive task execution in healthcare as depicted in Figure 2.6. These robots interact with patients in real-time, positioning themselves to dynamically read what may be needed, how patients want to interact with them, and how the care routine can be altered. It reduces robot-patient interaction dependence on preprogrammed protocols, but this comes with the ability to adopt a more natural and context-aware robot-patient interaction.

Additionally, multimodal sensory processing, i.e. speech recognition and gesture recognition, enables medical robots to maintain speech and gesture communication flexibility (and patient preference) given the patient can use a range of speech or gesture communication styles.

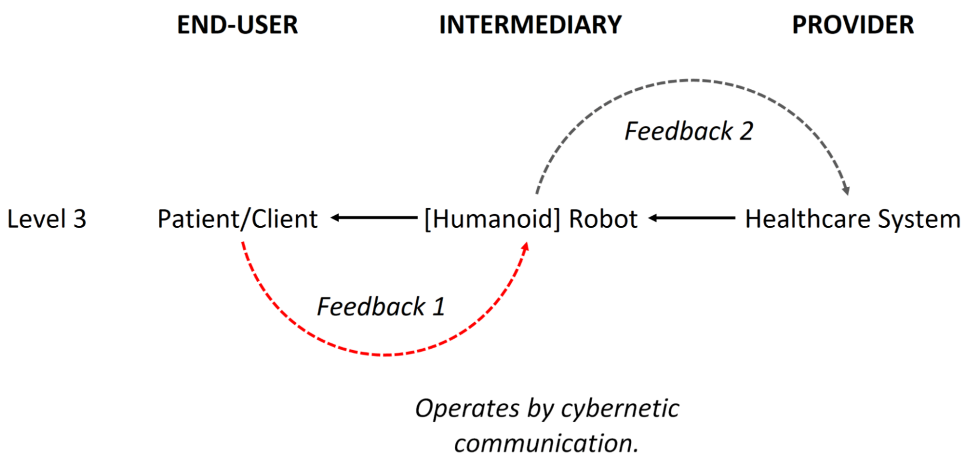


Figure 2.6: Learning from Patient Interactions in Autonomous Medical Robots

2.6.3 Integration with Evolving Healthcare Protocols

Now that healthcare protocols are changing, autonomous robots have to adapt their operational strategies based on new guidelines and best practices. This study considers a multimodal smart healthcare setting and a guideline of standardization to promote seamless integration across the healthcare systems. Standardizing data protocols such as HL7 for electronic health records (EHRs) minimizes the amount of time robots need for medical information exchange and processing. The other benefit is that robots can also implement adaptive AI models which would continuously update the knowledge base to comply with changing regulatory standards and medical standards.

2.6.4 Challenges in Adaptation

Nevertheless, progress has been made, but there are still many obstacles to the way of robot adaptation well in the healthcare setting. The main issue is to guarantee that robotic adaptations are reliable. As the RoboSAPIENS project puts it, safety and prevention from unintended consequences during adaptive learning require the real-time verification of robotic decisions. A challenge of this kind is to stay within the range of practical commercially available operations and computationally expensive deep learning models, and still be both adaptable and efficient. In addition, robots have to consider how to be ethical when dealing with patient privacy, information security, and informed consent and employ adaptive learning techniques.

2.7 SAFETY AND HUMAN-ROBOT INTERACTION IN HEALTHCARE

2.7.1 Establishing Safety Standards

For autonomous robots to be used in healthcare, they must be safe, and safety is extremely important. Because of the complexity of the hospital environment, robots should follow strict safety standards, design human-centric, be equipped with interactive safety features, and be trained extensively. These factors guarantee that robots can work alongside healthcare professionals without endangering the patient.

International safety regulations and guidelines underlie the safety of human-robot interaction in healthcare. Valori et al. (2021) describe that in ISO 10218-1 and ISO 10218-2 standards, key safety principles for collaborative robots are defined, including limitations on power and force for reducing injury risks. These standards provide a regulatory framework that allows robots to be deployed in healthcare that are safe to operate around human workers without the need for physical barriers. These guidelines are further refined by the ISO/TS 15066 specification with force thresholds and acceptable interaction zones between humans and robots (Herrmann & Melhuish, 2010).

In addition, researchers recommend risk assessment methodologies for validating healthcare robots' safety. In a path planning study by Kazanzides (2009), robots estimate the real-time risk of operating in the environment and adjust their trajectories accordingly. It significantly improves robot safety by preventing unexpected collisions and easy interaction with hospital staff. New steps such as the COVR Toolkit present a method of structured safety validation to be used within the context of robotic systems before their deployment (Valori et al., 2021).

2.7.2 Designing for Human-Centric Safety

To ensure the safety of the human-centric aspect with the use of healthcare robots, the human-centric safety feature should be prioritized. One particularly notable example of soft artificial leather padding to prevent injury from accidental collision is Lio, a personal health assistant robot, according to Miseikis et al. (2020). Collision detection, limited speed mechanisms, and compliant motion control are included in Lio to allow it to operate autonomously in healthcare facilities without harming humans.

The basic principle behind predictive hazard detection is another element in human-centric side design. Mohamed (n.d.) notes that studies in autonomous navigation in healthcare are useful in demonstrating the necessity of using deep learning models to predict human movement and adapt robotic behavior accordingly. According to Kulić and Croft (2005), the robotic assistants used in hospitals utilize computer vision and physiological sensors to estimate patient stress levels and adjust the interaction strategy to make the experience pleasant.

2.7.3 Interactive Safety Measures

For robot-human interaction to be safe, real-time safety mechanisms have to be implemented. Speed and Separation Monitoring (SSM) is described by Valori et al. (2021) as one of the most effective strategies, where robots dynamically adjust their speed according to the distance of their near neighbors. This approach prevents the occurrence of safety or abrupt movements in crowded hospital settings.

Herrmann and Melhuish (2010) explain that other safety measures aim for force-controlled compliance, that is, the robots will exert minimal force on humans when in contact. This comes in handy, particularly for robotic assistants that perform physical tasks involving lifting patients or delivering medical supplies. According to Mohamed (n.d.), human-aware navigation models empower robots to identify and avoid pedestrians to have smooth mobility in healthcare environments.

It was shown that adaptive motion planning algorithms improve safety by experimental simulation using Robot Operating System (ROS) and Gazebo (Mohamed, n.d.). The algorithms enable robots to predict human intentions and alter their paths around hospital workflow. Thus, medical robots can efficiently navigate while keeping a safe distance from healthcare workers and patients.

2.7.4 Training and Protocol Development

Then there need to be comprehensive training programs and standardized safety protocols to protect robots from being deployed in healthcare safely. A European project such as COVR Toolkit offers step-by-step testing methodologies to validate robot force impact, navigation accuracy, and emergency stop effectiveness (Valori et al., 2021). Such a structured approach lets healthcare institutions test out compliance before robots are deployed for clinical application.

Training programs for healthcare professionals also are important in supporting smooth human-robot collaboration, in addition to technical safety protocols. The studies on hospital staff training with robotic assistants (Kulić & Croft, 2005) emphasize that medical personnel should be familiarized with robotic behavior, interaction protocols, and manual override mechanisms. Hospital workers are taught the use of robotic systems hands-on and in simulation-based training, increasing their confidence in how to use them, while also understanding the limits of their safety.

2.8 Operational Challenges and Solutions for Autonomous Robots in Healthcare

Incorporating autonomous robots into healthcare poses several operational hurdles that need to be overcome to enable the robots to be efficient, reliable, and harmonious with hospital environments. The key challenges are navigating complex environments, integrating with healthcare systems, human-robot interaction, and reliability and maintenance. It is important to respond to these problems to enhance the functionality and acceptance of robotic solutions used in medical contexts.

2.8.1 Navigating Complex Environments

Autonomous robots have to navigate in hospitals which are highly dynamic environments, where patients, medical staff, and changing layouts create complex and changing situations for them. The Reason Behind it: Fragapane et al. (2021) explain that Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) algorithms applied with LiDAR and computer vision enable robots to build real-time maps and utilize them to adapt to the presence of obstacles as they move. These technologies help autonomous material transportation by enabling robots to navigate hospital corridors without human intervention.

Nevertheless, these advantages have not overcome the issue of remaining navigation conflicts, which is especially difficult for robots in high-traffic environments sharing navigation simultaneously. According to my research, decentralizing control in multiagent systems can improve movement path optimization and blockages (Fragapane et al., 2021). However, machine learning-based predictive modeling may lead to further development of robots' ability to predict changes in hospital layouts and dynamically change their routes accordingly.

2.8.2 Integration with Healthcare Systems

Its integration with existing healthcare infrastructure is a major challenge in deploying autonomous robots in hospitals, said Ness et al. (2024). The legacy network still exists in many hospital systems, and communication between robots and Electronic Health Records (EHRs), hospital logistics, and pharmacy databases is not easy. Moreover, the absence of standardized communication protocols becomes a further hurdle to achieving interoperability, which means cannot work with teams of robotic fleets and hospital management systems.

Healthcare robotics efforts include Health Level Seven (HL7) protocols and Internet of Robotic Things (IoRT) frameworks to improve communication between medical robots and hospital IT networks (Kabir et al., 2023). Furthermore, any such medical robot can be connected among themselves using a Robotic Operating System (ROS) based architecture, which ensures the medical robots can go into the fleet management platform for coordination and efficiency (Kabir et al., 2023).

2.8.3 Human-Robot Interaction

To be used widely in hospitals, autonomous robots must interact well with healthcare workers and patients as noted by Holland, Kingston, McCarthy, Armstrong, O'Dwyer, et al. (2021). The robot's ability to understand verbal and nonverbal cues helps in natural and intuitive communication and consequently influences user acceptance. The robots, including Lio and Pepper, use not only communications-based processing but also emotional recognition to enhance patient engagement and conversation with hospital staff as highlighted in Miseikis et al. (2020).

Holland, Kingston, McCarthy, Armstrong, O'Dwyer, et al. (2021) use adaptive user interfaces to explain how hospital staff interact with robots through gesture detection, touchscreen controls, and voice commands, which means that the tasks can be delegated seamlessly. Christoforou et al. (2020) however mention that studies show that some hospital employees are not keen to interact with robots because they are not familiar or see them as a threat to job security. To enhance human-robot collaboration and to guarantee that medical staff is comfortable working with robotic assistants, they suggest training programs and hands-on demonstrations.

2.8.4 Reliability and Maintenance

According to Kabir et al. (2023), one can no longer afford to compromise on the long-term reliability of autonomous healthcare robots, since technical failures could disrupt hospital operations or jeopardize patients' safety. Such predictive maintenance strategies that rely on real-time diagnosis monitoring are of utmost importance for detecting potential failures even before they happen. According to Ness et al. (2024), robots need to be secured with strict cybersecurity measures as they are handling sensitive patient data and could be a target of cyber-attacks if not properly secured.

Using AI-driven monitoring systems, hospitals can keep on monitoring the robot's performance in real-time and address problems like battery failures, navigation errors, and mechanical malfunctions immediately (Kabir et al., 2023). It is important to pay attention to the development of redundant systems and fail-safe mechanisms in future developments to allow robots to continue working even in cases of partial system failures.

2.9 Using ROS for Autonomous Robots in Medical Supply Delivery

In medical supply delivery, the Robot Operating System (ROS) has changed the way autonomous robots operate. ROS is an open-source, modular framework for navigation, coordination of tasks, fleet management, and system integration for hospital logistics. It is applied in autonomous medical supply delivery in this section, and system architecture, navigation strategies, fleet management, and deployment challenges are explored.

2.9.1 System Architecture and Fleet Management in ROS-Based Medical Supply Delivery

A fleet management system (FMS) for medical supply delivery robots is required to operate in a healthcare setting efficiently. The FMS based on ROS allows for real-time task allocation, scheduling, and coordination of multiple robots, delivering medical supplies. Research on hospital delivery robot fleet management emphasizes the need for centralized control systems that allocate the delivery tasks per the hospital logistics need, and thereby plan the path optimally and minimize the delivery time (Mac et al., 2024).

Moreover, robots can autonomously receive and perform delivery requests from hospital staff by integrating ROS-based navigation stacks with fleet management systems. Multi-robot coordination algorithms are included in this system to ensure that robots can avoid congestion in hospital corridors while completing delivery tasks (Gu et al., n.d.).

The Rosbridge protocol is another major piece of the ROS architecture in medical supply delivery that allows for communication between robots, hospital networks, and cloud-based systems. This protocol facilitates real-time fleet monitoring, remote diagnostics, and task execution and thus is improving hospital supply chain efficiency (Laguna, n.d.).

2.9.2 Navigation and Path Planning Strategies in ROS-Based Hospital Environments

The crucial challenge of an autonomous medical supply delivery robot is efficient navigation in the complex hospital environment. They have to autonomously navigate corridors, avoid obstacles, and carry and deliver medical supplies to people while interacting with hospital infrastructure. These robots achieve autonomous movement using the features of the ROS navigation stack as obtained by integrating Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM), path planning algorithms, and sensor fusion techniques.

Gmapping-SLAM is one of the primary mapping techniques used in ROS-based robots for the real-time construction of a map and self-localization in hospital corridors (Gu et al., n.d.). Search algorithms as well as the Dynamic Window Approach (DWA) are then utilized for global and local path planning, respectively, to allow robots to still adjust their paths on the fly as per their real-time sensor inputs.

Finally, a study on indoor supply delivery robot navigation shows how ROS-based systems integrate multi-layer navigation frameworks which make robots navigate with the best possible routes considering hospital floor layout, obstacle detection mechanisms, and congestion management strategies (Rahman et al., n.d.). In addition, hospital delivery scenarios have been accomplished in ROS-based simulations with autonomous map generation, eliminating the need for manual navigation configurations (Xian, n.d.).

2.9.3 Human-Robot Interaction and Safety Considerations

The safe human-robot interaction (HRI) is critical to deploying medical supply delivery robots in healthcare environments. Human-aware navigation systems can be developed based on ROS that use sensor fusion techniques such as LiDAR, ultrasonic sensors, and computer vision to avoid disturbing the patients, doctors, and nurses while robots navigate (Garzón et al., 2017).

ROS-based robots adopt adaptive path planning mechanisms to adaptively adjust their trajectories in real time to facilitate real-time decisions in human-populated environments. The predictive motion control is emphasized in a study on multi-robot coordination that robots can anticipate human movement patterns and proactively adjust their navigation paths to avoid collisions (Garzón et al., 2017).

2.9.4 Simulation and Testing of ROS-Based Medical Delivery Robots

Simulation environments are created before they are deployed in real hospital settings to first test them out in terms of their functionality, their navigation accuracy, and how efficient they can be when having to execute a task. Gazebo-based hospital simulation models developed using ROS allows the researchers to simulate a real-world hospital layout, and a controlled environment to test robot movement, obstacle avoidance, and scheduling of tasks (Xian, n.d.).

These simulation models also help the robot to learn and AI training before real-world deployment of the robots, to handle complex scenarios. Simulation-based evaluations of battery efficiency, task completion rates, and fleet coordination strategies are presented as well as a simulation of robot performance before integration into hospital workflows (Laguna, n.d.).

2.9.5 Challenges and Future Directions in ROS-Based Medical Supply Delivery

While there are many advantages of robots that use ROS in medical supply delivery, there are also challenges in the implementation of such robots.

1. *Latency on the Network and Communication Levels:* The use of wireless communication protocols may result in latency problems in fleet coordination which require low latency

5G networks to efficiently execute tasks in real-time (Laguna, n.d.).

2. Thus, robust scheduling algorithms must be created to prevent congestion and to distribute resources optimally, as the robotic fleets are to expand across large hospital networks (Mac et al., 2024).

3. Robots must be able to learn continuously from their surroundings and adapt to human behavior, moving objects, and unpredictable hospital layouts (Gu et al., n.d.).

2.10 Engineering Design Process for Autonomous Robots in Medical Supply Delivery Using ROS

Developing autonomous medical supply delivery robots that operate with a Robot Operating System (ROS) is a critical aspect of the engineering design process. This section of writing explores established approaches to designing, developing, and deploying robotic systems based on past research design.

2.10.1 Design Methodologies in Medical Robotics

The development of medical robots was followed by structured methodologies that unite kinematic modeling, hardware selection, control system development, and safety validation. It is important to research concurrent engineering that integrates design, safety, and usability considerations early in the development process (Formilan et al., n.d.).

Typically, medical robots are designed in an iterative process that starts with computer-aided design (CAD), simulation models, and real-world experience for optimization of the robotic performance. Dombre et al. (2013) suggest that a hierarchical engineering design model for the process is structured development that can be divided into mechanical design, sensor integration, and real-time software implementation.

Topological synthesis is one important part of the engineering process in which the robot's configuration, degrees of freedom (DOF), and structural properties are defined. According to research, design constraints, redundancy considerations, and technological progress of actuators and materials have a large impact on the overall efficiency of medical robots (Dombre et al., 2013).

2.10.2 System Architecture and Functional Components

Medical delivery robots are composed of three main layers in its architecture:

1. *Mechanical structure* - sensors and actuators are included under hardware.
2. ROS-based middleware for task execution and navigation integrated into the Control System.
3. AI-driven path planning algorithms and fleet management systems for optimizing delivery routes and coordinating multiple robots.

The control system is important as it provides real-time communication of the hardware components to the ROS-based navigation framework. Modular software development is studied as a way to improve scalability and system adaptability to facilitate the customization of robotic functionalities by hospitals according to the requirements of specific logistics (Kazanzides, 2009).

2.10.3 Safety Considerations in Medical Robot Design

Safety is an important factor in the autonomous medical robot design process. Medical robots are different from industrial ones since they operate in human-populated environments and hence need to have advanced safety such as collision avoidance, emergency stop mechanisms, and AI-driven risk assessment systems.

Jung et al. (2014) suggested that Risk Management Strategies such as Failure Modes and Effects Analysis (FMEA), Fault Tree Analysis (FTA), and redundant mechanisms are key to ensuring operational reliability. These methods allow for identifying potential failure points and introducing fail-safe mechanisms.

Kazanzides (2009) states that surgical and assistive medical robots need increased fail-safe measures since a malfunctioning system could lead to patient or healthcare professional harm. In this regard, it is suggested that real-time monitoring systems be integrated into the architecture based on ROS to detect and mitigate errors in system performance.

2.10.4 Optimization of Control Systems and Navigation

To design an autonomous robot for medical supply delivery, high-precision navigation systems are needed to guarantee accurate route execution in hospital environments. Today, advancements in SLAM-based localization, sensor fusion, and AI-driven motion planning have brought tremendous enhancement in the efficiency of ROS-based robots (Rahman et al., n.d.).

Dombre et al. (2013) conclude that the application of an AI-based path-planning algorithm facilitates medical delivery robots to navigate dynamically around obstacles to optimize delivery schedules. Additionally, their studies highlight that the deep learning-based reinforcement model allows the robot to learn from prior experience of navigation such that it optimizes its decision-making ability.

To aid in task scheduling and operational efficiency, FMS is integrated within the ROS-based architectures to facilitate multi-robot coordination, task prioritization, and workload distribution in hospital environments (Rahman et al., n.d.).

2.10.5 Challenges and Future Directions

Although a great deal of design engineering methodology sophistication has been achieved, however, there are still several issues:

1. *Hospital Infrastructure Integration* - While it's still a complex problem to ensure an integration with hospital logistics systems.
2. Expanding robotic fleets poses scalability issues as no congestion needs to be present.
3. *Human-Robot Interaction (HRI)* - This is still a challenge to design intuitive user interfaces for healthcare staff.

2.11 Ethical and Regulatory Considerations of Autonomous Robots in Healthcare

2.11.1 Ethical Implications

Among these challenges inherent in the integration of autonomous robots into healthcare settings, the ethical challenges are about patient dignity and autonomy. According to Stahl and Coeckelbergh (2016), ethical frameworks ought to guarantee that technology promotes rather than undermines human values in healthcare.

2.11.2 Regulatory Landscape

While healthcare robots are still a new challenge for the regulatory landscape, current legislation is not yet fully adapted to it. Fosch-Villaronga and Drukarch (n.d.) state that as robots are used more in patient care and surgical procedures, there must be clear guidelines on liability and accountability.

2.11.3 Impact on Healthcare Practice

According to Leenes et al. (2017), autonomous robots are changing how healthcare is practiced, for either routine assistance or complex surgeries. They require strict standards of safety, effectiveness, and ethics to avoid operational errors that may cause patient harm during these transformations.

2.11.4 Considerations for Policy Development

According to Holder et al. (2016), whilst developing policies regarding the use of autonomous robots in healthcare, technological reliability, ethical implications and potential socioeconomic impacts of the use by healthcare personnel should be accounted for. Healthcare policies should focus on improving healthcare outcomes, without replacing the essential components of care with human elements.

2.11.5 Future Directions

For the future integration of autonomous robots in healthcare, technologists, ethicists, regulators, and the public need to engage. There should be priority given to patient safety, privacy, and the ethical use of technology to make sure that robots do not replace but rather complement human healthcare providers.

2.12 Novelty and Research Gap in Autonomous Robots for Healthcare

2.12.1 Recent Innovations

Healthcare has seen some major improvements due to the arrival of autonomous robots. In particular, innovations like increased mobility, higher precision in surgeries, and more advanced interaction with patients through AI have been notable (Fragapane et al., 2021). According to Stahl and Coeckelbergh (2016), these technologies are so new that the adaptation and improvement of these systems must continue until they fully integrate into different healthcare contexts.

2.12.2 Identifying Research Gaps in Autonomous Robots for Healthcare

Although technological solutions have provided practical autonomous robots to medical logistics (i.e., TUG, HelpMate), a critical review of the literature has shown that there are still significant limitations that inhibit the use of the solution in dynamic, multi-faceted hospital settings. Namely, existing solutions are often inadequate in providing real-time flexibility, built-in multi-priority scheduling, and multi-layered verification necessities of patient-specific critical processes. The present state-of-the-art is dominated by fundamental mobility, but it is shallow in terms of operational and human-centric safety mechanisms. These shortcomings are formalized in the following Gap Analysis Matrix (Table 2.1) by comparing the limitations of existing systems with the proposed contributions of the MSDS project, which in turn becomes the exact novelty of the given research.

Feature / Mechanism	Limitation / Gap in Prior Work	Key Existing Solutions	MSDS Contribution / Novelty
Navigation & Adaptability (Crowd/Social)	Reliance on static, pre-programmed maps, hindering real-time adaptation to dynamic obstacles and rapid layout changes.	HelpMate; Early TUG Robots	Uses Online SLAM (`slam_toolbox`) and ROS 2 Nav2 for dynamic environment mapping and real-time obstacle avoidance.
Task Scheduling & Efficiency (ETAs)	Use of simple FIFO scheduling, resulting in inefficient handling of urgent or time-sensitive deliveries.	Early Logistics Robots	Implements an intelligent task scheduling system that dynamically prioritizes deliveries based on urgency (Hypothesis 2, Question 4).
Delivery Verification & Security	Verification relies solely on delivery location or staff handover, increasing the risk of misdelivery of sensitive supplies.	Commercial TUG; HOSPI Systems	Designs a dual verification framework combining BLE (for coarse proximity) and RFID (for positive, final recipient confirmation).
Operability & Monitoring	Lack of a centralized, accessible cloud-based interface for fleet monitoring, remote diagnostics, and operator intervention.	Standalone AMRs	Integrates a web-first architecture (Next.js/Fastify) enabling real-time fleet management, remote manual control, and task lifecycle auditing.

Table 2.1: Gap Analysis Matrix Linking Literature Limitations to MSDS Contributions

1. **Limited Adaptability to Dynamic Healthcare Environments**

   Operating in highly unstructured and dynamic hospital settings is one of the most important challenges for autonomous medical robots. Although Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) and AI-driven navigation systems improved robotic mobility, robotic systems still lack adaptability in crowded and unpredictable hospital environments (Kazanzides, 2009). Real-time decisions are difficult for autonomous robots due to human movement, emergency scenarios, and unforeseen obstacles.

   Furthermore, many robots rely on preprogrammed maps and therefore cannot adapt to a hospital layout that changes. For instance, the early robotic hospital transport systems, like the HelpMate robot, had rigid navigation capabilities, since it relied on static maps (Rahman et al., n.d.). The reliance of robots on reinforcement learning techniques that still need to be developed so that the robots continuously learn and adjust to the hospital settings in real-time is a need of future research.

2. **Integration Challenges with Existing Healthcare Systems**

   One major bottleneck to the widespread use of autonomous robots in hospitals is the inability to seamlessly integrate them into Hospital Information Systems (HIS) and Electronic Health Records (EHRs). Some robots have been able to integrate IoT-enabled frameworks for real-time monitoring while others fail due to data interoperability issues (Thamrongaphichartkul et al., 2020).

   Challenges include:

   - *Integration problem:* different hospitals use a different format of data and a different protocol on the network.
   - *There is a risk:* Autonomous robots transmit patient's sensitive data, and they need to be protected with advanced encryption and security frameworks.
   - *Instant Access to Updated Patient Records:* Robots must have instant access to the most recent patient records so that supply can be delivered accurately and without disruption (Haleem et al., 2022).

3. **Ethical and Regulatory Challenges in Autonomous Healthcare Robotics**

   The deployment of autonomous robots in healthcare raises significant ethical concerns, particularly regarding patient privacy, liability in case of errors, and job displacement. Despite advancements in AI-driven diagnostics and robotic caregiving, there remains no universally accepted regulatory framework governing robotic decision-making and medical liability (Jung et al., 2014; Kazanzides, 2009).

   Key ethical concerns include:

   - Who is responsible when a robot makes an incorrect decision?
   - Can robots operate independently in critical care environments without human intervention?
   - How do robots ethically handle sensitive patient interactions?

   Studies suggest that public perception and healthcare worker acceptance are major barriers to adoption. Many healthcare professionals worry that automation will lead to job losses, despite research showing that robots are designed to support, not replace, human staff (Dasari et al., 2024b). Future research must explore policy frameworks that balance automation benefits with ethical and employment considerations.

4. **Limited Human-Robot Interaction Capabilities**

   One of the most important challenges in autonomous healthcare robotics is effective HRI. Service robots like Lio and Pepper have been developed to interact with patients, but so far, most autonomous medical robots still lack advanced communication and interaction skills (Holland, Kingston, McCarthy, Armstrong, O'Dwyer, et al., 2021).

Many current robotic systems cannot understand complex verbal and non-verbal cues and hence it is hard to interact with doctors, nurses, and patients in real-time (Garzón et al., 2017). Furthermore, robots lack emotional intelligence and they are not able to give patients comfort and social engagement in the healthcare setting.

Future research should focus on:

(a) Large-scale training data improving natural language processing through AI-driven conversational agents.

(b) Gesture and facial recognition for non-verbal communication.

(c) Adaptive interaction models enabling robots to adjust to patient needs.

5. **Reliability and Maintenance of Autonomous Medical Robots**

However, reliability problems persist for medical robots that boost efficiency. One of the studies shows high failure rates in robotic components which results in increased downtime and maintenance costs (Rahman et al., n.d.).

Common reliability issues include:

(a) Inefficient battery management leading to frequent downtime.

(b) Mechanical failures from continuous operation in hospital environments.

(c) Software bugs in AI-driven navigation and task execution causing delivery delays (Jung et al., 2014).

6. **Lack of Standardized Safety Regulations for Medical Robots**

A second gap in the research is that there is no universally agreed-upon safety standard for autonomous medical robots. Medical robots operate in unstructured environments compared to industrial robots which follow strict safety regulations (e.g., ISO 10218-1, ANSI/RIA R15.06), so they require advanced safety mechanisms (Kazanzides, 2009).

7. **Future Directions in Medical Robotics Research**

- Development of adaptive learning algorithms enabling autonomous adaptation to hospital environments.
- Enhancement of AI-driven diagnostics for improved patient monitoring and medical decision-making.
- Improvement of multi-robot coordination for seamless task sharing across hospital departments.
- Innovation of robust cybersecurity frameworks protecting sensitive patient data.

- Creation of low-cost robotic solutions addressing affordability and accessibility in diverse healthcare settings.

2.13 Conclusion and Future Directions for Autonomous Robots in Healthcare

2.13.1 Summary of Key Findings

The critical literature review conducted above identifies the importance of the advances in healthcare robotics. Although technologies bring much accuracy and effectiveness in terms of patient management and organizational activities, the specified gaps prove that the next generation of solutions, such as MSDS, is required to cover all the aspects of real-time flexibility and priority-based logistics in unpredictable hospital environments. Stahl and Coeckelbergh (2016) and Holder et al. (2016) mention that while these technologies offer many benefits, they also have difficulties, like ethical difficulties, difficulties of integration, and precise regulatory frameworks.

2.13.2 Implications for Future Research

Future research should seek to increase the adaptability of Healthcare Robots to complex human environments (Stahl & Coeckelbergh, 2016). Additional studies are needed to integrate them into the clinical setting given the need to preserve patient safety and privacy.

2.13.3 Advancements in Robot Capabilities

Indeed, the further progression of AI and machine learning can greatly contribute to the future development of healthcare robots to perform more complex tasks of greater self-governance (Fosch-Villaronga & Drukarch, n.d.). To make their continued patient benefit, these technological improvements have to keep high standards in safety and ethics.

2.13.4 Regulatory and Ethical Frameworks

As the healthcare sector continues to see the increasing pace of robotics technology, robust ethical and regulatory frameworks are crucial. These frameworks should support innovation, while at the same time supporting safe, ethical, and beneficial to patients, deployments of AI.

Since they have to be continuously updated to accommodate new challenges as they arise, this is a seemingly endless task.

Overall, this literature review lays the groundwork for the design and development of the Medical Supply Delivery System (MSDS), a ROS-based autonomous robot aimed at solving logistics challenges in dynamic hospital environments. The insights from prior work and gaps identified in this work provide an opportunity for the MSDS to contribute meaningful answers through robust technical design, human-centered interaction strategies and careful empirical evaluation.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The development of an autonomous medical supply delivery robot requires a well-structured approach. This chapter captures all the necessary methods employed in designing, developing, and evaluating the proposed system.

To systematically guide the system from problem identification to final implementation, the Engineering Design Process (EDP) is employed as the core framework. Also, the Robot Operating System (ROS) serves as the primary software model for communication between components.

Selecting the right components and materials is crucial in creating the proposed system and this chapter shows just that. Testing and validation are also highlighted to ensure the intended functional requirements are met.

3.1 Engineering Design Process (EDP)

The Engineering Design Process (EDP) is a series of steps that can be followed when developing a product. This process is cyclic and iterative, meaning steps can be repeated for as much as needed, making room for improvements as you go. There are 7 steps which will all be employed in this project:

1. Problem Identification
2. Research and Background Study
3. Specify Requirements
4. Brainstorm and Concept Generation
5. Select Best Design

6. Detailed Design and Prototyping
7. Testing and Iteration

3.2 Problem Identification

The first step in this design process is defining the problem you're trying to solve. Despite advancements in patient care in hospitals, some challenges remain, which affect patient care and the efficiency of hospital operations. Some of these challenges include:

- *Understaffing and Increased workload on healthcare workers:* This sometimes results in deviation of attention from patient care to handle logistical tasks.
- *Error-prone delivery:* Human errors like misdelivery of supplies, unreliable timing, or inability to track can occur. There have been cases where supplies didn't reach their destination on time because the personnel in charge of the delivery got pulled into another emergency.
- *24/7 unavailability of support staff which causes delays in accessing necessary supplies.*
- *Risk of infection from contact with infected patients:* Transmission of diseases remains a major issue as shown in cases like COVID-19 and other highly infectious diseases. This shows the need to limit exposure unless required.

3.3 Research and Background Study

To develop a useful and innovative solution, extensive research is required. This includes analyzing similar solutions and identifying suitable frameworks for implementation.

There have been several robots built to help with hospital logistics, each with its capabilities and limitations.
HelpMate, for example, was one of the early solutions for transporting materials autonomously in both hospitals and nursing homes. It uses sensor-based motion planning algorithms like vision, ultrasonic, and infrared proximity to sense its environment and navigate through it (J. Evans et al., 1989; Holland, Kingston, McCarthy, Armstrong, O'Dwyer, et al., 2021). However, it lacks the means for recipient identification and because it relies on a preloaded map, it lacks flexibility in adapting to changing environments.

Aethon also created the TUG robot to perform similar functions by using data from a scanning laser, infrared, and ultrasonic sensors for its navigation (Holland, Kingston, McCarthy, Armstrong, O'Dwyer, et al., 2021). It can transmit commands to the elevator through a wireless network, specifying which floor to go to. Like HelpMate, it stores preloaded CAD maps of the hospital building, lacking real-time planning for dynamic environments.

The i-MERC (Intelligent Medical Robot) was developed to address a common challenge - transporting meals at the appropriate time and the right temperature. It maintains food quality in healthcare centers during transit by using a heating system and separate compartments for both hot and cold food to keep them at safe temperatures ("i-Merc", n.d.). However, it is tailored specifically for meal delivery and does not account for other types of deliveries.

Existing systems have utilized various software platforms for control and navigation such as Robot Operating System (ROS), Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM), custom embedded code, MATLAB/Simulink, AI-based frameworks, and others.

3.4 Specify Requirements

Requirements, constraints, and criteria for success are often put on projects due to size in nature or complexity associated with building the project. By having specific requirements, the project stays within the constraints that will allow it to be successful. These requirements can take various forms including functional, non-functional, and technical requirements.

3.4.1 Functional Requirements

Functional requirements define what a product or system must do. Based on the problem statement and prior research, the system must:

- Address the limitations of previous solutions by enabling dynamic mapping without requiring a preloaded map.
- Localize itself within the dynamic map.
- Identify designated recipients and plan their path accordingly.
- Provide an interface for user interaction.
- Schedule tasks efficiently.
- Autonomously navigate hospital environments while avoiding obstacles.

- Enable the tracking and confirmation of deliveries.
- Operate continuously until all assigned tasks are completed.

3.4.2 Non-functional Requirements

Non-functional requirements define how a system should behave rather than what it does. They specify criteria used to evaluate the system's operation rather than its specific behaviors. ' These requirements include:

- The system should operate for at least 3 hours before requiring a recharge.
- The recipient identification process should have a high accuracy rate.
- Supplies should be delivered within a maximum of 10 minutes per ward.
- Operating noise should be minimal.
- Obstacle response time should be under 2 seconds.
- Payload capacity should be at 20 kg.
- The system's speed should be suitable for a typical busy environment to avoid hazards.
- Speed should be suitable for a typical busy environment to avoid hazards.
- The system should be easy to operate by an average person.

3.4.3 Technical Requirements

Technical requirements define the technical specifications (hardware and software) that must be considered to complete a project successfully. They outline capabilities and performance expectations the final product must achieve. These include:

- The system should include a computational unit capable of processing sensor data and making real-time decisions.
- The system should enable sensor fusion combining data from multiple sensors which will be useful for effective mapping, localization, navigation, and obstacle detection.
- The system should be modular, allowing component upgrades or replacements without major redesigns.

- The system should provide a means of identifying designated recipients.
- The system should enable delivery confirmation before and after the supply handover.
- The system should log delivery events for tracking and future reference.
- The system should operate for at least 3 hours on a full charge.
- The power system should support all computational, sensor, and motion control needs without performance degradation.

3.4.4 Design Constraints and Limitations

These are factors that limit the design choices. They could be physical, technical, environmental, or financial.

1. *Physical Constraints*
   (a) Standard doorway and corridor widths in hospitals.
   (b) Floor surface variations (tiles, carpet).
   (c) Storage space availability for docking.
2. *Technical Limitations*
   (a) Battery life vs. Weight trade-off: Increasing battery capacity adds weight, affecting mobility.
   (b) Load capacity vs. Robot size balance: Increasing load capacity requires a larger robot.
   (c) Sensor range and accuracy in varying lighting.
3. *Environmental Constraints*
   (a) Variable lighting conditions (dimly lit, bright).
   (b) High-traffic areas during peak hours.
   (c) Wet floors during cleaning may cause slipping.
   (d) Material selection must ensure components are non-toxic, easy to sanitize, and safe for hospital environments.
4. *Financial Constraints*
   (a) Quality vs. Cost trade-off: High-quality components must be balanced against affordability.

3.4.5 Criteria for Success

These metrics determine how the success of the product will be measured. Based on the requirements of this project, it will be considered successful if:

- The robot can autonomously navigate dynamic and unknown environments.
- It correctly identifies and verifies 95% of designated recipients.
- It completes at least 90% of scheduled deliveries.
- Real-time monitoring and efficient task scheduling are effective.

3.5 Brainstorm and Conceptualize Solutions

There are usually multiple solutions to one problem. This process involves generating alternative solutions and ideas for the stated goal. It's always a good idea to explore various alternatives before settling on one solution.

3.5.1 Locomotion Systems

Since the solution must be mobile, we need to consider the possible locomotion systems. Different robot configurations exist, each with its advantages and disadvantages.

Legged robots are biologically inspired locomotion systems, making them suitable for uneven terrain and even stair climbing. Quadruped and Bipedal are examples of this system. In artificial human-made environments, however, their efficiency is worse. They require complex control algorithms, consume a lot of energy, and can be slow.

Aerial Drones (UAV - Unmanned Aerial Vehicle), another type of robot configuration easily bypasses obstacles and can be fast. However, they are not suitable for indoor environments due to noise, air disturbance, and safety risks. They also require a lot of computational power, are costly, and involve high complexity.

Wheeled robots offer another viable option, as they are stable and energy efficient. Unlike legged robots, they are not biologically inspired but are suitable for artificial human-made environments like the ones present in hospitals. However, their efficiency worsens on uneven or rough surfaces, and they may struggle with obstacles like stairs. Wheeled locomotion systems have multiple possible motion architectures that the system can take - Differential Drive, Omnidirectional Drive, Ackermann Steering Model, etc.

Differential Drive mostly uses two independent drive wheels with caster wheels (not driven) for support and stability. The motor speed of each wheel is adjusted to rotate or translate, which is quite simple and easy to implement. However, it requires a large turning radius making it not ideal for confined spaces, unless it's really small.

Omnidirectional Drive allows movement in any direction without having to rotate the robot or change orientation. There are different wheel configurations that can be employed for Omnidirectional movement, one of which is the use of four driven mecanum wheels. Other wheel configurations used for this Drive include Omni wheels drive train, Swerve drive, Kiwi drive, and so on, with Mecanum being the most commonly used. By controlling the speed and direction of rotation of each motor, the robot can perform any movement, making it highly maneuverable. However, it requires advanced control algorithms for wheel coordination and shows challenges in accurately calculating odometry.

Ackermann Steering Drive uses a steering mechanism similar to cars, where the front wheels turn while the rear wheels drive. It allows a vehicle's wheels to turn at different angles while navigating curves, preventing tire sliding. Like the Omnidirectional Drive, it requires advanced control algorithms and has a wide turning radius.

3.5.2 Software Frameworks

Besides locomotion, the choice of software framework is also crucial, as it handles robot control, perception, communication, and navigation.

Robot Operating System (ROS) is a widely used open-source framework designed specifically for robotics applications. It provides libraries and tools for navigation, mapping, and communication between components. Its ability to support modular development is a plus.

Arduino-based firmware is another viable option. It is a simple and lightweight approach that directly controls hardware components. However, it is low-level and lacks the computational power for autonomous navigation and advanced decision-making.

Custom embedded software involves writing bare metal firmware tailored specifically for the robot's hardware. It provides more control over system performance and has no reliance on external frameworks, reducing dependencies. However, it lacks flexibility and requires significant development effort to implement advanced features like navigation and communication protocols that ROS already provides.

MATLAB/Simulink offers a strong environment for modelling and simulation but is less convenient for real-time deployment on a physical robot in a hospital environment.

AI-based Frameworks such as TensorFlow or PyTorch are powerful for learning-based modules (e.g. perception and decision making) but still require an integration layer for hardware, navigation, and system control.

Each of these frameworks supports different programming languages, ranging from Python to C++.

3.5.3 Mapping Techniques

To effectively navigate dynamic environments autonomously, the robot requires a mapping and localization system that enables it to understand its environment.

SLAM (Simultaneous Localization and Mapping) is a technique that enables a robot to build a map of an unknown environment while simultaneously localizing itself within that map. This technique is widely used in indoor navigation due to its high accuracy and adaptability. However, it may struggle in featureless or highly dynamic environments and require significant computational power.

GPS-Based Navigation provides absolute position data by triangulating signals from satellites. However, it is not suitable for indoor environments due to its low precision and weak signal in enclosed spaces. Therefore, it is primarily used for outdoor navigation.

Visual-inertial odometry (VIO) is a technique that combines camera (visual) data, with data from an Inertial Measurement Unit (IMU) to estimate position, orientation, and movement. While VIO works well for short-term navigation, it tends to get less accurate over time if not corrected, due to small errors gradually adding up.

Beacon-based Localization uses fixed beacons or markers placed in the environment. It can provide robust localization but requires extensive setup and maintenance.

Static Pre-mapped Navigation relies on preloaded maps such as CAD drawings. This is simple but not adaptable when the environment changes.

3.5.4 Human-Robot Interaction Alternatives

Additionally, a human-robot interaction system is required to allow nontechnical users to communicate with the robot. This system should enable staff to assign tasks and monitor progress. Possible interface options include a voice command interface, web application, mobile application, desktop application, and an onboard touchscreen interface.

- *Onboard Touchscreen Interface* allows users to interact with the robot at close range but requires them to physically approach the robot.

- *Voice Command Interface* is intuitive but may be unreliable in noisy hospital environments and can struggle with accents or overlapping speech.
- *Mobile Application* enables control and monitoring from smartphones but requires installation and may be limited by device compatibility.
- *Desktop Application* is suitable for control from nurse stations but lacks mobility and may not be accessible to all staff.
- *Web Application* is accessible from any device with a browser (PC, tablet, mobile) and does not require installation, making it highly scalable for hospital use.

3.6 Select Best Design

This process eliminates the solutions that might not be the most appropriate for the project and remains with the better solutions. The solution should be selected that fulfils all the requirements set out in the earlier stages of the process.

3.6.1 Selection of Locomotion System

Given the evaluation of different locomotion and motion systems, the best option is a wheeled robot with an omnidirectional drive (Mecanum wheels), which has sufficient stability and high manoeuvrability to be applied to hospital environments. Speed, control complexity, and lack of efficiency in operating in artificial environments make legged robots infeasible. Indoor use of aerial drones is not suitable and they are a safety hazard. Ackermann steering and differential drive are not considered because their large turning radius made them unsuitable for confined spaces.

3.6.2 Selection of Software Framework

After analysing multiple software frameworks, ROS emerged as the most viable and convenient option because it already has prebuilt libraries for navigation and control. The computational power of Arduino-based firmware is not enough for complex navigation; custom embedded software lacks flexibility and requires a lot of development efforts, making both options impractical.

3.6.3 Selection of Mapping & Localization Technique

SLAM (Simultaneous Localization and Mapping) was chosen as the mapping technique due to its adaptability and efficiency in indoor environments. GPS-based navigation provides poor navigation in enclosed environments and Visual-Inertial Odometry (VIO) can deteriorate over time, ruling out both alternatives.

3.6.4 Selection of Human-Robot Interaction Method

Possible human-robot interaction options include a voice command interface, web application, mobile application, desktop application, and an onboard touchscreen interface. Voice commands may be affected by high background noise in busy hospitals. Onboard touchscreen interfaces would require the user to approach the robot physically, which is less convenient than remote solutions. Mobile, web, and desktop applications allow remote access; however, mobile and desktop apps require installation, which may limit accessibility. A web application is the most scalable option, as it supports remote access from multiple devices, including PCs, tablets, and smartphones.

3.6.5 Modes of Operation

The robot should function in four primary modes, each handling a specific operation:

1. **Mapping Mode** is the setup phase. It enables the robot to explore the environment to map its surroundings and label important locations, using SLAM. This generated map is uploaded to the web app for labelling and scheduling. Mode switches when the user indicates mapping is complete and switches the mode.

2. **Delivery Mode** (Task execution phase) occurs when the robot follows scheduled delivery tasks assigned to it via the web app. It moves to the designated ward or room, scans for the nearest recipient, approaches them, and confirms recipient identity before and after delivery. Mode switches when all assigned deliveries are complete.

3. **Manual Control Mode** allows the robot to be manually controlled via the web app or a joystick during emergencies. Mode switches when manually changed on the web app or keypad.

4. **Standby Mode** occurs when the robot has no pending task and is idle at its base station, awaiting new tasks. Mode switches when new tasks are assigned or manually changed.

3.6.6 Component Selection and Justifications

With the design finalised, appropriate hardware and software components can be selected to suit this design and its requirements.

1. *Motion*:

   (a) 97mm Mecanum wheels to enable omnidirectional movement. Compared to smaller wheels, larger wheels support the weight of the robot and allow the robot to navigate over small obstacles like cables, and uneven flooring.

   (b) JGB37-520 Hall Encoder DC Motor (12V, 178 RPM) drives the wheels. The rpm selected provides a balance between speed and torque to ensure smooth movement in a hospital setting. If the rpm is too high, the robot will move too fast, making it difficult to control. If it's too low, the robot will be slow, inefficient, and late for deliveries.
   The Hall encoders enable movement tracking, improving odometry-based navigation. They generate pulses as the wheel rotates which determines the distance traveled and wheel speed, improving localization accuracy.

   (c) L298N Motor Driver (2x) controls motor speed and direction. It supports PWM (Pulse Width Modulation) control, enabling smooth acceleration and deceleration.

2. *Sensors and Perception*:

   (a) LiDAR (Slamtec RP C1) measures distances using a laser, useful for mapping and obstacle detection. The selected LiDAR offers 360° scanning, precise mapping, and real-time obstacle detection, making it ideal for SLAM-based navigation in hospitals.

   (b) MPU6050 IMU provides motion stability and helps detect tilt or sudden movements. This enables the robot to maintain balance.

   (c) BLE (nRF51822) are Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) beacons. They are low-power and transmit signals using Bluetooth low energy, allowing them to be used for recipient identification.

   (d) RC522 RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) also emits short-range signals that can be useful for recipient identification, ensuring the correct recipient receives the supplies.

3. *Processing Units*:

   (a) Raspberry Pi 4 (4GB RAM, 32GB SD Card): Considering all the computational requirements, a single-board computer (SBC) would be needed. Raspberry Pi 4 has enough processing power to run ROS, SLAM, and navigation algorithms efficiently.

(b) ESP32 handles Wi-Fi communication and offloads some sensor processing, reducing the processing load on the Raspberry Pi. It has built-in BLE, enabling BLE scanning.

(c) Mega 2560 R3 provides additional I/O pins for controlling multiple peripherals like the dc motors.

4. *Power Requirements*:

(a) 3S2P (3 in Series and 2 in Parallel) Li-ion Battery Pack (12V, 7Ah) gives stable 12V power to drive motors efficiently. L298N motor drivers require 12V. The series connection increases the voltage capacity - the maximum voltage the power supply can handle. The parallel connection increases the capacity rating, i.e, runtime, so the robot can last longer before requiring a recharge.

(b) 3S Battery Management System (BMS) prevents overcharging, overcurrent, and overheating in 3S (3 in series) battery packs. It ensures the cells charge and discharge evenly to avoid damage.

(c) USB DC-DC Step-down module allows the voltage of the battery pack to be stepped down from 12V to 5V. It contains a buck converter that does this conversion and ensures safe power distribution to low-voltage components like Mega 2560, ESP32, RFID and others. It also provides a USB slot that can be used to power the Raspberry Pi.

(d) DC Power Jack Connectors provides an outlet to charge the battery or use the battery to power the system. This makes it convenient as we don't need to remove the batteries for charging.

(e) AC/DC Adapter to charge the batteries. It converts AC power from a wall outlet into DC 15V/3A.

(f) Lithium Battery Indicator Board to display the battery's charge level through an LED bar display.

(g) Buck Converter is used to reduce and stabilize the charging voltage before it reaches the battery. A 3S Li-ion battery pack (3S2P) requires 12.6V for full charging (since each cell charges up to 4.2V). The adapter provides 15V, which is too high for direct charging. If directly connected to the 3S battery, it could overcharge the batteries or trigger BMS protection, stopping the charge. The voltage and current of the buck converter will be tuned to match the correct charging parameters for the battery pack - 12.6V and a safe current limit like 3A.

5. *User Interaction*:

(a) Bluetooth speakers enable the robot to communicate through voice alerts. It can be used for pre-recorded instructions or custom audio alerts (e.g., "Please scan your RFID tag"). Wireless functionality prevents unnecessary wiring complexities.

(b) Rocker Position Switch acts as a manual override switch for turning the robot on or off.

(c) 1x4 Keypad allows the user to manually switch between modes: mapping, delivery, manual control, and standby.

(d) 0.96" Inch OLED Display Screen Module (I2C, 128×64 Resolution) displays system status, messages, and operating mode in real-time. It is compact and consumes low power.

3.6.7 Material Selection and Justifications

The selection of the chassis material is crucial, as it provides structural support and a mounting point for various components. For this, a combination of materials is used: acrylic, wood, and foam board.

Each base would be made of acrylic and wood, with the wood in the center and acrylic on each side. This is to compensate for the weakness of one material in the other. Acrylic, as a material alone, is easily deformed under external pressure and load. Wood, while structurally strong, wears out quickly under heat or moisture. By combining these materials, we have a cost-effective, rigid structure that can withstand heavy loads and different environmental conditions. As a plus, the acrylic gives it an aesthetic look.

The walls are made of foam board to minimize weight while offering enclosure protection.

Metal, although a great option, was avoided due to its weight and cost, which could affect mobility. Besides being expensive to cut and shape, there is also a great risk of a short circuit happening, if not properly designed, as metal is conductive.

Material selection is critical for ensuring durability, safety, and compatibility with hospital environments.

3.6.8 Environmental Impact Assessment

The environmental impact of the system is analyzed in terms of material sustainability, energy consumption, and long-term hospital deployment.

The system is powered by a rechargeable Li-ion battery pack, thus reducing the use of disposable power sources. The materials used for the chassis, acrylic, wood, and foam board, were selected for their affordability, durability, and lightweight features, reducing energy demands. Acrylic and foam board can be easily cleaned and maintained to hospital-grade hygiene standards.

Modular component replacements are also provided in the design, which means that bad parts can be changed without having to get rid of the entire system, reducing electronic waste.

Supply deliveries are automated, which reduces human workload and thus reduces physical strain and exposure to biohazards. It reduces unnecessary movement and cross-contamination risk. The system is nondisruptive as it operates with minimal noise.

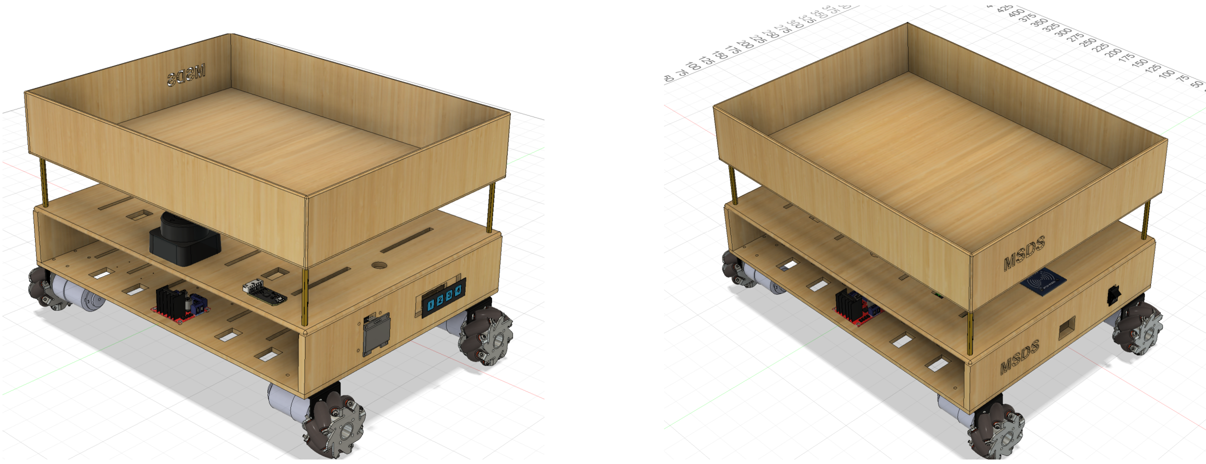
The system has a low environmental footprint due to the use of sustainable materials and efficient power consumption.

3.7 Detailed Design and Prototyping

This phase translates all conceptual ideas into a fully structured and functional system through its various aspects. This project includes the mechanical, electrical, and software aspects.

3.7.1 Mechanical Design

The robot chassis provides structural support and is modeled using the Fusion 360 software. It provides a visual representation of the chassis. Two prototypes were designed and the figures below show the various views of each prototype's CAD model. Figure 3.1 show the views of the first prototype and Figures Figure 3.2 show the views of the second prototype.



(a) Front view (b) Rear view

Figure 3.1: Prototype 1

(a) Front view

(b) Rear view

Figure 3.2: Prototype 2

The dimensions chosen consider even weight distribution and sufficient internal space for the components. Each base dimension is 300mm by 400mm with a height of 60mm per level. The thickness of the acrylic is 3mm, the wood is 8mm, and the foam board for the walls is 10mm. The components are evenly spaced, and those needed for user interactions, like the RFID reader, switch, keypad, and OLED display, are placed near the ends of the compartment for easy access. Due to the presence of the LiDAR on the middle deck, few components are placed there so as not to obstruct the sensor's view and perception.

3.7.2 Electrical Design

The electrical design ensures safe and efficient power distribution to all components. The 12V battery pack powers the DC motors through the L298N motor drivers. The 12V is stepped down through a USB adapter, providing a 5V USB port for the Raspberry Pi and 5V terminal wires for the components that require it, such as ESP32, RFID reader, OLED, and others. LiDAR, IMU, and motor encoders interface with the Raspberry Pi for navigation processing.

3.7.3 Process Flow

The initial setup of the system begins with the mapping mode. The user would move the robot using a joystick or the web app so that the environment can be mapped and restricted areas like stairs and walls marked. This map will be displayed and can be labeled on the web app so that operators can use it to schedule deliveries.

As patients are admitted, RFID tags and BLE Beacons will be issued to them. It will be registered to each recipient with their names and any other necessary information. During the delivery assignment phase, wards and patients are selected for delivery on the app. An optional custom message can also be added. The Mode is then changed manually on the web app or the keypad on the robot chassis.

The robot goes to these wards and scans for the closest beacon of scheduled patients and goes there. It plays out the custom message through its speakers and asks the recipient to scan their RFID tag. It should be scanned before, for patient identification and after delivery, for confirmation of delivery. If no or wrong RFID is scanned, it waits for a predefined time for a correct RFID scan before moving on to the next nearest recipient. It goes to the next task and does the same thing. After all deliveries are completed, it returns to its base on the map and awaits further instructions.

For any BLE signal not found, it moves on to the next patient before trying again. If it has tried to find the signal more than 3 times, it stops trying and automatically labels it as a missed delivery and updates it on the web app. Figure 3.3 shows a simplified flow chart of this process.

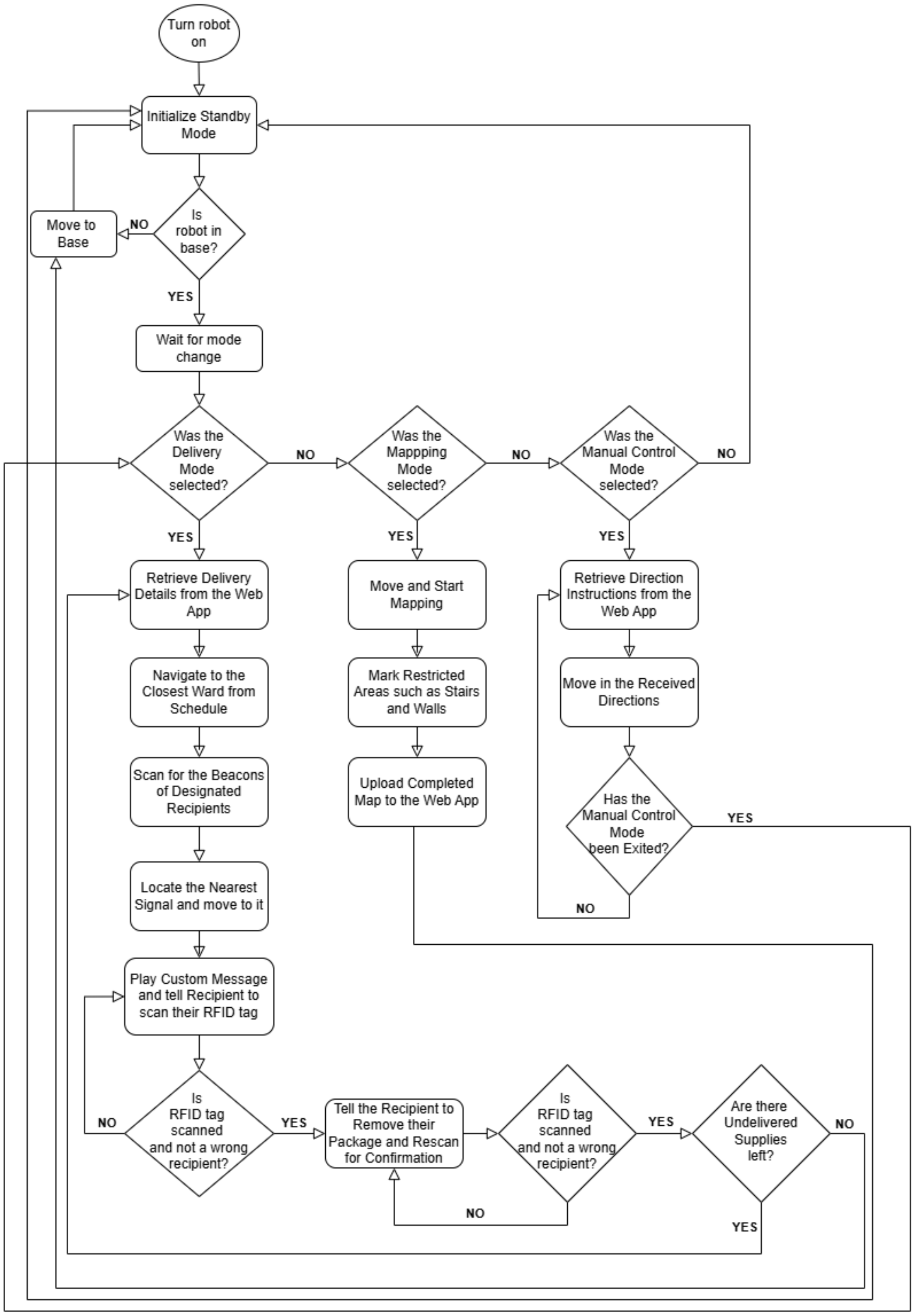


Figure 3.3: Flow Chart Showing Process Flow

3.7.4 Software Architecture

This includes all the software technologies and designs to be used in the system, including the web app technologies and the robot's control system.

The Web app utilizes the Next.js framework as its frontend framework and Fastify (Node.js) with TypeScript for API development. MongoDB would be used for database management. The web app supports features like mode switching, task scheduling, manual control, display of live maps, tracking, and patient and recipient data management. WebSockets, Rosbridge_suite and MQTT will be used for real time updates.

The robot requires path-planning algorithms to navigate its environments.

A* Algorithm is used as a global path planning tool to find the shortest path between the robot's current position and the target destination. It uses a heuristic function to minimize costs efficiently.

The Dynamic Window Approach (DWA) generates a local path for obstacle avoidance. If any obstacle is found on the robot's path, the old path will be replaced with a new one to avoid that obstacle (Nguyen & Vu, n.d.). It then adjusts the direction and the velocity of the robot to avoid collisions.

To identify and locate recipients, the robot scans for BLE beacons assigned to scheduled individuals. It estimates distance based on RSSI (Received Signal Strength Indicator), selects the closest patient, and moves in its direction.

3.7.5 ROS Based Architecture

This project uses the Robot Operating System (ROS) as the framework for interaction, navigation, and perception among components. The architecture of the system follows a modular ROS-based architecture where each node performs a particular task and communicates with each other using ROS topics, services, and actions.

ROS2 is a more modern build system and offers several advantages and features over ROS1, including better real time capabilities, improved performance and scalability, robust communication system, cross-platform support, etc. ROS2 contains several distributions with ROS 2 Jazzy Jalisco being the most recent LTS distribution at the time of this writing and will therefore be utilized in this project. It has improved real-time capabilities, deterministic DDS communication, multi-threaded executors, and compatibility with Ubuntu 24.04.

System Architecture

1. *Sensing Layer:*
   This layer should collect relevant environmental and other types of data using onboard sensors such as the Slamtec RP Lidar C1, MPU6050 IMU, RFID modules, and BLE beacons.

   (a) The Laser node publishes `/scan` data for mapping and obstacle detection.

   (b) The IMU node publishes orientation data to `/imu/out`.

   (c) RFID and BLE data are transmitted through the ESP32 to ROS topics.

   (d) The data fusion node integrates encoder, IMU, and Lidar data by applying an Extended Kalman Filter (EKF) from the *`robot_localization`* package to stabilize the pose of the robot.

2. *Planning Layer:*
   ROS2 has a Nav2 framework which manages navigation as well as path and motion planning. This framework covers costmaps, global, local planning and a lot of other technicalities needed for efficient navigation.

3. *Control Layer:*
   The ros2 control framework handles actuation. It makes use of a mecanum drive controller plugin to calculate the velocity of wheels using inverse kinematics. These velocity commands should be converted into PWM signals for the L298N motor drivers with a custom hardware interface. Encoder data is also read back and published so that localization and SLAM nodes can use it.

4. *Scheduling Layer:*
   The robot should subscribe to essential tasks topics managed by a WebSockets/MQTT based Node.js web backend. Tasks manager node ranks tasks on a queueing system derived by proximity to the robot. The scheduler communicates with the navigation goals by ROS actions.

Safety Chain

Safety is carried out through different mechanisms integrated into the control loop.

Speed and Separation Monitoring (SSM):
Safety zones are expanded dynamically behind obstacles and human beings using the local costmap. The parameters of velocity scaling are used to modify the proximity thresholds (less than 0.6 m) when they are exceeded.

Emergency Stop (E-Stop):
A web switch which uses interrupts should ensure that PWM outputs to motor drivers are stopped immediately. The respective node suspends the controller manager.

ROS2 Components

The system will have the following ROS2 based components:

1. **Control and Hardware Interface:**

   ROS2 provides a modular framework called `ros2_control` for controlling the hardware through controllers that process commands, loaded as plugins.

   ROS2 Control contains controller plugins which can be selected based on the drive of your robot, such as `diff_drive_controller`, `mecanum_drive_controller`, `ackermann_steering_controller`, `tricycle_controller` and others, all of which are managed by the `controller_manager`. If the specific plugin needed does not exist, custom controller plugins can also be written and added. Necessary parameters like the `wheel_radius` (0.0485 m), `sum_of_robot_center_projection_on_X_Y_axis` (0.7 m) are added.

   The Hardware Interface connects ROS2 to the actual hardware. It receives the processed commands from the controllers and sends those commands to the motors through a specified communication protocol like Serial, Micro-ROS, etc. It also reads feedback like encoder values from the motors which can be published and used in other parts of the application.

2. **Local Localization:**

   Localization involves determining a robot's position and orientation within its environment in real time. Local Localization is tracking the pose of the robot as it progresses from its starting point. ROS2 provides a `robot_localization` package which contains an Extended Kalman Filter (EKF). An Extended Kalman Filter (EKF) is a mathematical algorithm used to fuse data from multiple sensors like wheel encoder odometry, IMU data, etc. This augments odometry with more stable local pose estimate, and less drift and noise.

3. **Global Localization:**

   Global Localization estimates the robot's pose on a fixed map, even without the knowledge of where it started from. ROS2 provides several algorithms for this, one of which is AMCL (Adaptive Monte Carlo Localization). AMCL is a probabilistic localization algorithm based on particle filters. It takes in the robot's laser scans, map, odometry, uses thousands of particles which signifies possible guesses of where the robot might be and compares expected laser scans from the map with real scans from the LIDAR. After a few moves, particles eventually converge to the most likely location.

4. **Mapping and SLAM:**

   Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) helps the robot to build a map while figuring out where it is on that map. The map it builds can be represented in different forms depending on the sensors being used and the user's preference. The most commonly used map representation is the 2D occupancy grid that contains pixels where each cell holds a value that represents the probability of that space being occupied. While there are also multiple packages in ROS2 for building maps, `slam_toolbox` will be used in this project.

5. **Costmaps:**

   A Costmap is a unified map that integrates diverse information about the environment taken from multiple sources. Instead of just the information of "free" or "occupied", each cell in the costmap stores additional information like how risky it is to move there. Costmaps are organized into multiple layers, each providing specific information. ROS2 Nav2 package uses two main costmaps: Global and Local Costmaps.

   The Global Costmap provides a complete representation of the environment and is primarily used for planning paths to destinations. Layers used here include: `static_layer` which loads the fixed map of the environment, `obstacle_layer` which provides real-time sensor data to identify new obstacles, `inflation_layer` which inflates the identified obstacles to safe navigational buffers, etc.

   The Local Costmap provides a local view of the robot's immediate surroundings, typically covering just a few meters, and is used for motion planning and obstacle avoidance. Layers usually used here are the `obstacle_layer` to locate the obstacles in the immediate vicinity and `inflation_layer` to give safe navigation clearance, etc.

6. **Path Planning and Smoothening:** ROS2 provides a high quality framework for anything navigation called `nav2`. It contains several plugins for planning and smoothing paths, motion planning, etc. In this project, `nav2_smac_planner` will be used for the path planning. This planner uses the A* and hybrid-A* algorithms on the global costmap to compute an optimal path, which does not cross known obstacles. `nav2_smoother` will also be utilized to smooth the intended path produced by the Smac Planner. It eliminates sharp turns and makes the path smooth such that the robot flows freely in corridors.

7. **Motion Planning / Local Control:**

   Motion Planning involves converting the planned path into velocity commands. Finding the most suitable plugin to use in nav2 depends on the robot's drive, use case, anticipated performance and computational requirements of your robot. For an Omnidirectional drive, there are different options:

(a) *Nav2 rotation shim controller and Nav2 regulated pure pursuit controller:* The combination offers responsive path following and dynamic speed control. Pure Pursuit controller enables the robot to move along the curve in a more natural way and to decelerate around sharp turns or any obstacles. The Rotation Shim plugin will make sure that suitable in-place orientation corrections are made before or after linear moves.

Advantages:

- Smooth paths, which are natural and good in small areas.
- Handles continuous path of any curvature without too much oscillation.
- The speed is regulated inbuilt with regard to the curvature and distance to obstacles.

Limitations:

- Tuning is not easy to do right.
- Performance is also a little lower in very cluttered places than trajectory sampling planners.

(b) **Dynamic Window Approach (DWA/DWB):** The Dynamic Window Approach planner assesses several forward trajectories at every cycle and rates them according to costmap safety, goal heading and velocity alignment. `dwb_core` is a variant of the DWA Algorithm.

Advantages:

- Very sensitive; suitable for fast recuperation in dynamic situations.
- Can be easily extended to cost functions (e.g., obstacle cost, goal alignment).

Limitations:

- Is able to produce sudden change or zigzagging movements unless smoothed.
- Needs much tuning to work well with mecanum wheels.

8. **Recovery and Behavior Trees:**

The behavior trees offer an organized manner in which the robot can deal with complex behaviors such as task execution, recovery actions and state transitions. It allows the robot to make an effort of replanning, re-localization, or safe stop in the case of surprise obstacles. The nav2 package for this is the `nav2_bt_navigator`. Nav2 also offers the `nav2_behaviors` package for creating behaviours. Behaviors are recovery strategies called in the case of unexpected failures during navigation. Custom behaviors can be created and the ones present in nav2 include spin, backup, wait, etc.

3.7.6 Kinematics Model

A kinematic model is a mathematical representation of a robot's motion behavior. Unlike conventional wheeled robots, Mecanum wheels allow omnidirectional movement due to the rollers attached at 45° at its circumference. Figure 3.4 shows an image of a typical Mecanum wheel.

Figure 3.4: Mecanum Wheel

When four Mecanum wheels are used together, we can achieve a net resulting direction in any direction by varying the direction and speed of rotation of the wheels. For example, by changing the velocities of the diagonal wheels, a motion between 0° to 360° can be achieved. Figure 3.5 shows different motions that can be achieved when the direction of each wheel is changed.

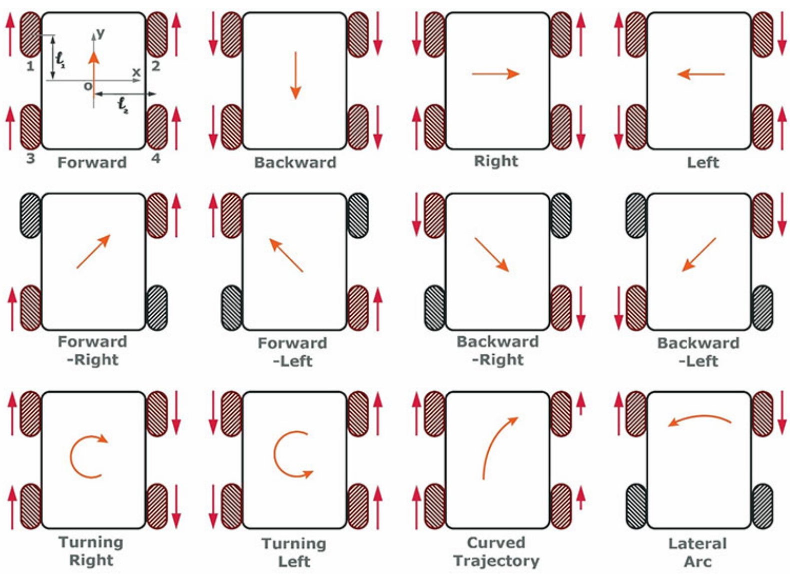


Figure 3.5: Motions of Omnidirectional Platform

The kinematic equations describe how each wheel's angular velocity translates into the linear and angular motion of the overall robot.

Forward Kinematics in robotics computes the position of the end effector using specified joint parameters ("Mecanum wheels - Ecam Eurobot", n.d.). In this case, forward kinematics computes the robot's global velocity using the angular velocity of each wheel. Given four wheels, each at a 45° angle, the relationship between wheel velocities and robot movement is expressed as:

$$\begin{aligned} v_x &= (\omega_{fl} + \omega_{fr} + \omega_{rl} + \omega_{rr}) \cdot \frac{r}{4} \\ v_y &= (-\omega_{fl} + \omega_{fr} + \omega_{rl} - \omega_{rr}) \cdot \frac{r}{4} \\ \omega_z &= (-\omega_{fl} + \omega_{fr} - \omega_{rl} + \omega_{rr}) \cdot \frac{r}{4(l_x + l_y)} \end{aligned} \tag{3.1}$$

Or in matrix form:

$$\begin{bmatrix} v_x \\ v_y \\ \omega_z \end{bmatrix} = \frac{r}{4} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\ -1 & 1 & 1 & -1 \\ -\frac{1}{l_x+l_y} & \frac{1}{l_x+l_y} & -\frac{1}{l_x+l_y} & \frac{1}{l_x+l_y} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \omega_{fl} \\ \omega_{fr} \\ \omega_{rl} \\ \omega_{rr} \end{bmatrix} \tag{3.2}$$

Where:

- r is the wheel radius, in this case, $97mm/2 = 48.5mm = 0.0485m$,
- l_x is the robot's length or half of the distance between the front wheels (200mm),
- l_y is the robot's width or half of the distance between the front and rear wheels (150mm),
- $\omega_{fl}, \omega_{fr}, \omega_{rl}, \omega_{rr}$ are the angular velocities of the four wheels - front left, front right, rear left, rear right,
- v_x and v_y are the linear velocities in the x and y directions, and ω_z is the angular velocity around the z-axis (yaw).

Inverse Kinematics involves finding joint parameters that achieve a specified end effector's position. In this case, inverse kinematics computes each wheel's angular velocity needed to achieve a given robot's global velocity. This relationship can be expressed as:

$$
\begin{aligned}
\omega_{fl} &= \frac{1}{r}(v_x - v_y - \omega_z(l_x + l_y)) \\
\omega_{fr} &= \frac{1}{r}(v_x + v_y + \omega_z(l_x + l_y)) \\
\omega_{rl} &= \frac{1}{r}(v_x + v_y - \omega_z(l_x + l_y)) \\
\omega_{rr} &= \frac{1}{r}(v_x - v_y + \omega_z(l_x + l_y))
\end{aligned} \tag{3.3}
$$

Or in matrix form:

$$
\begin{bmatrix} \omega_{fl} \\ \omega_{fr} \\ \omega_{rl} \\ \omega_{rr} \end{bmatrix} = \frac{1}{r} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & -1 & -(l_x + l_y) \\ 1 & 1 & (l_x + l_y) \\ 1 & 1 & -(l_x + l_y) \\ 1 & -1 & (l_x + l_y) \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} v_x \\ v_y \\ \omega_z \end{bmatrix} \tag{3.4}
$$

Given the maximum RPM of the motors (178 RPM) and wheel size (97 mm diameter), the maximum theoretical velocity can be estimated as:

$$
V_{\max} = \frac{\pi d \cdot \text{RPM}}{60} = \frac{\pi \times 0.097 \times 178}{60} \approx 0.9 \text{ m/s} \tag{3.5}
$$

3.7.7 Mathematical Modeling of the Autonomous Robot System

In order to correctly describe the logic of operation, movement, and decision-making of the medical delivery robot, the system is segmented into four subsystems: motion kinematics, local planning and control, behaviour modeling, and task scheduling. All the parts are mathematically modeled with the figures and tables.

Path Planning - SmacPlanner2D

The core of the SmacPlanner2D is A* search algorithm on the global costmap grid. A* is a graph search algorithm which uses a cost function to expand nodes (grid cells). The cost function for the A* is mathematically represented as:

$$
f(n) = g(n) + h(n) \tag{3.6}
$$

Where:

- n: A node (grid cell)

- $g(n)$: Actual cost from start to node n (path cost so far)
- $h(n)$: Heuristic estimate from n to the goal (guess of remaining cost)

The heuristic function is an estimate of the cost from the current node to the goal. There are multiple options for the calculation of the heuristic function, including:

- Euclidean Distance: $\sqrt{dx^2 + dy^2}$
- Manhattan Distance: $|dx| + |dy|$
- Diagonal/MOORE Distance: $\max(|dx|, |dy|)$

Where dx and dy are the differences in x and y coordinates between the current node and the goal node.
The algorithm chooses the next node with the lowest $f(n)$.

Each grid cell has a cost from the global costmap: 0 for free space, 1–254 for inflation zones and 255 for lethal obstacles to be avoided. The grid cost $g(n)$ is represented as:

$$\begin{aligned} g(n) &= g(n_{\text{prev}}) + \text{step\_cost}(n_{\text{prev}}, n) \\ g(n_{\text{next}}) &= g(n_{\text{current}}) + \text{distance}(n_{\text{next}}, n_{\text{current}}) + \text{costmapvalue}(n_{\text{next}}) \end{aligned} \tag{3.7}$$

SmacPlanner adds additional penalties to entering high-cost cells (inflation zones), turning (in some configs) and distance traversed (based on grid resolution).

SmacPlanner2D uses costmap values in its cost model. These are exaggerated, and thus, ensure the robot does not go through narrow corridors when there are other better ways. The route is penalised when it uses expensive cells and the planner will use open and safer spaces.

Regulated Pure Pursuit Controller (Path Following)

Given a goal point (x_g, y_g), current robot pose (x_r, y_r, θ_r), and lookahead distance L_d, we define the curvature κ as:

$$\kappa = \frac{2y_L}{L_d^2} \equiv \omega = v \cdot \kappa = \frac{2v \cdot \sin(\theta_r)}{L_d} \tag{3.8}$$

Where:

- y_L: lateral offset to the lookahead point
- θ_r: heading error between the robot's current orientation and the direction to the lookahead point

- v: linear velocity of the robot regulated by the curvature and obstacle distance

Velocity scaling factor
The velocity scaling factor can be written as:

$$\begin{aligned} v &= v_{\max} \cdot \exp(-\alpha \cdot |\kappa|) \\ v &= v_{\max} \cdot \min\left(1, \alpha d_{\text{obs}}, \beta \frac{1}{|\kappa| + \epsilon}\right) \end{aligned} \tag{3.9}$$

with tuning constants α, β and small ϵ to avoid division by zero.

DWB Trajectory Sampling Model

The controller generates candidate trajectories and assigns a total cost:

$$\text{score} = w_p d_p + w_g d_g + w_o c_o \tag{3.10}$$

Where:

- d_p: distance from the global path
- d_g: distance from final goal
- c_o: cost from obstacle proximity (from costmap)

Example: Table 3.1 Trajectory Scoring Example in DWB Local Planner Using Weighted Cost Function

Trajectory	Path Error	Goal Error	Obstacle Cost	Score ($w_p = 1, w_g = 2, w_o = 3$)
T1	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.2 + 0.8 + 0.3 = 1.3
T2	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.3 + 0.4 + 1.5 = 2.2

Table 3.1: Example DWA Trajectory Scoring

3.8 Experimental Plan

This section contains a few experiments that will validate the robot's capability. Each experiment below states the experimental design, the primary performance indicators to be measured, and explicit pass/fail criteria.

Table 3.2 defines the experiments and KPIs. Results from each experiment will be reported in Chapter 4.

ID	Name	Design	Primary KPIs & Pass Criteria
E1	Doorways / Narrow Gaps	Single design; door widths 70–90 cm, intermittent blockages	Transit success rate, clearance distance, pause duration per transit. Runs: 20 transits per doorway. Pass: success ≥95%, zero contacts, pause ≤2 s.
E2	Localization Robustness	Single design; 10 CW + 10 CCW laps; 5 laps with lidar occlusion	Tag-pose RMSE, relocalization time after occlusion, drift per distance. Pass: RMSE ≤10 cm / 3°, relocalize ≤3 s, drift ≤1% per 10 m.
E3	Energy & Endurance	Single design; loops until low battery at 0 / 5 kg payloads	Wh/100 m, Wh/task, operating time to cutoff, rate of efficiency loss with payload. Pass: report full curves; efficiency loss ≤15% at 5 kg vs 0 kg.
E4	Payload / CoM Sensitivity	Single design; payloads 0 / 3 / 5 / 7 kg and top-heavy configuration	Tracking error, stop distance, oscillation, settling time, tip/instability events. Pass: stop distance increase ≤25% at 7 kg; no tip or sustained instability.
E5	Fault Injection & Safety	Lidar/camera dropout, Wi-Fi loss, inflation=0, e-stop	Detection latency, safe-state stop time, recovery/abort time, collisions. Faults: lidar/camera dropout, Wi-Fi loss, encoder failure, e-stop. Pass: emergency stop ≤0.3 s; recover/abort ≤5 s when possible; zero collisions.

Table 3.2: Evaluation Scenarios, Design, and Primary KPIs with Pass Criteria

3.9 Testing & Iteration

Testing and iteration allow issues to be identified, analysed, and resolved. The first step of the testing process starts with the deployment in a virtual hospital environment, and its navigation will be tested using tools like Gazebo and RViz.

If the simulation is successful, the physical tests will be attempted in a controlled space that has similar characteristics to an actual hospital. The robot's ability to meet its set requirements will be tested. The final prototype will then be deployed in a live hospital.

For these tests, some performance metrics will be analysed:

- *Navigational Accuracy*: The ability of the robot to reach its precise destination.
- *Delivery Accuracy*: The robot's ability to deliver supplies timely and accurately.

- *Obstacle Avoidance*: The robot's ability to detect and avoid obstacles.
- *Recipient Identification*: The robot's ability to validate, locate, and confirm the designated patient or recipient.
- *Map Accuracy*: Does the generated map accurately represent the real hospital floor plans?
- *Battery Performance*: Test how long the robot can operate before it needs to be recharged.

Following each test cycle, necessary adjustments are made and iterated into the process.

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The chapter includes the findings of the design, development and partial implementation of the Medical Supply Delivery System (MSDS). The results are Preliminary Results by a hardware prototype and Autonomous/Expected Results obtained by simulated validation E1-E5 from Table 3.2 in Chapter Three. To achieve the necessary standards, we combine the quantitative data with the help of Median [IQR] time measurements and Mean + SD continuous measurements to combine the required results. Analysis below follows the original structure with the experimental data being incorporated in the corresponding functional subsections. The summary of the overall performance is displayed in the Table 4.1.

4.2 Analysis

4.2.1 System Overview

The MSDS was designed as a modular system, integrating both robotics hardware and cloud-based software. This modularity ensured flexibility, ease of debugging, and scalability for multi-robot operation.

The robot hardware comprised:

- *Mobility System:* A four-wheel mecanum drive base driven by DC motors with quadrature encoders. This provided omnidirectional mobility, a critical feature in hospital corridors where tight turns, lateral movement, and precise alignment with doors are necessary.
- *Computation Unit:* A Raspberry Pi 4 running ROS 2 Jazzy, which coordinated higher-

level decision making, communication with the web server, and sensor fusion.

- *Control Layer:* An ESP32 microcontroller interfaced with low-level motor drivers (L298N) and sensors, allowing real-time motor control and encoder feedback.
- *Sensing System:* LiDAR for environment perception, IMU for orientation, and provision for RFID and BLE modules for patient/recipient identification.

The software framework included:

- *ROS2 Jazzy* for robotics middleware, message passing, and navigation stack integration.
- *Gazebo and RViZ* for testing, visualization, and simulation of navigation
- *Next.js and Fastify backend* for building the web-based hospital dashboard.

A major contribution of this project is the web-first design philosophy: unlike most hospital robots that operate as standalone systems, the MSDS includes a hospital-wide web application for administrators to schedule, track, and manage deliveries.

This overview demonstrates that the foundation of the system has been laid successfully, even though the navigation stack is not yet fully autonomous.

4.2.2 Mapping and Navigation

One of the most fundamental aspects of autonomous hospital robots is the ability to map and localize in dynamic environments. Hospitals present unique challenges: frequent human movement, changing furniture placement, and narrow hallways.

In the MSDS, SLAM (Simultaneous Localization and Mapping) was attempted using the LiDAR and encoder data. The robot generated a partial occupancy grid map of its surroundings, as shown in Figure 4.1. The map displays walls, open corridors, and obstacles detected within the LiDAR scan range. Although the mapping is not yet optimized for long-term deployment, it validates the capability of the robot to perceive and record its environment.

The MSDS web application also included a facility mapping interface (Figure 4.2). This allowed operators to:

- Start and stop mapping sessions.
- Save maps for reuse in navigation tasks.

- Load previously generated maps.
- Configure zones for task simulation.

The significance of this dual approach (ROS-based SLAM and web-based mapping management) is that it integrates robotics perception with administrative oversight. While the robot perceives its local environment, the hospital staff can visualize, edit, and store facility maps through the web dashboard.

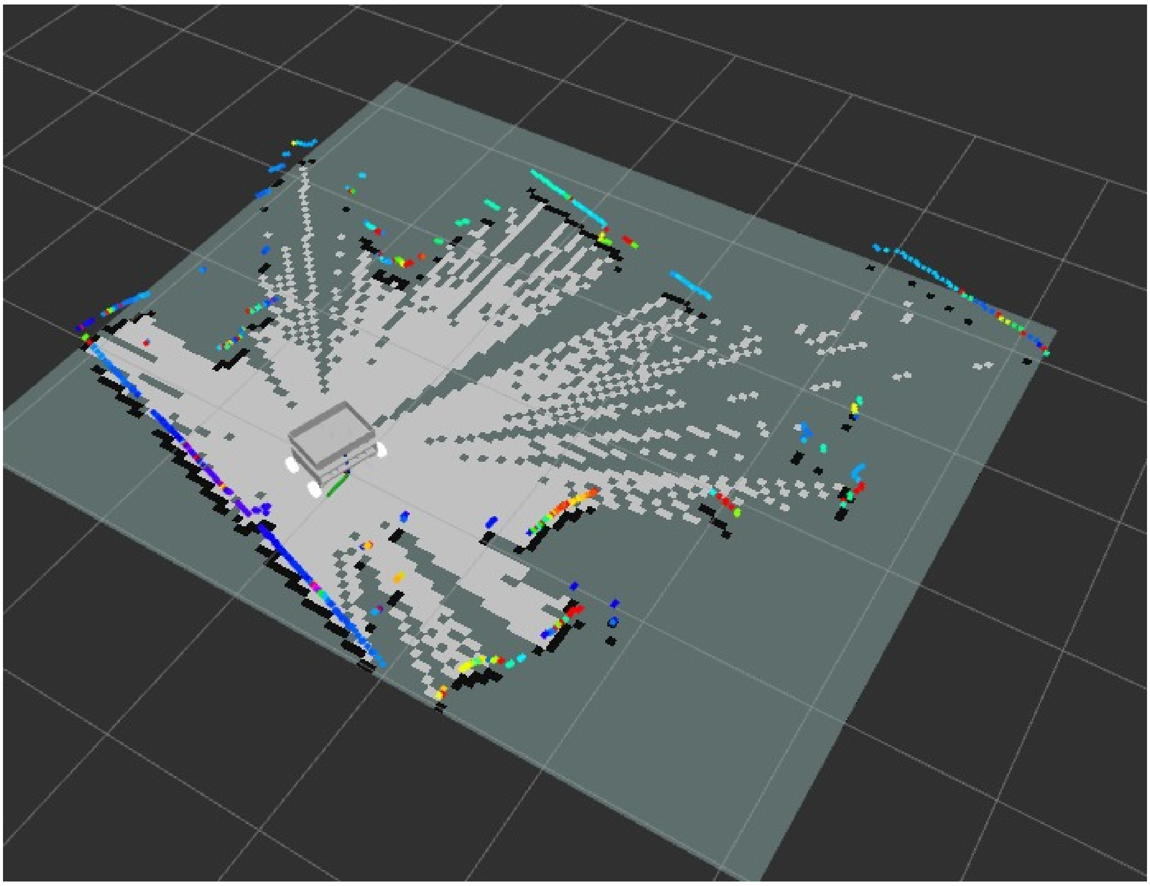


Figure 4.1: Generated 2D occupancy map from the robot's LiDAR and odometry

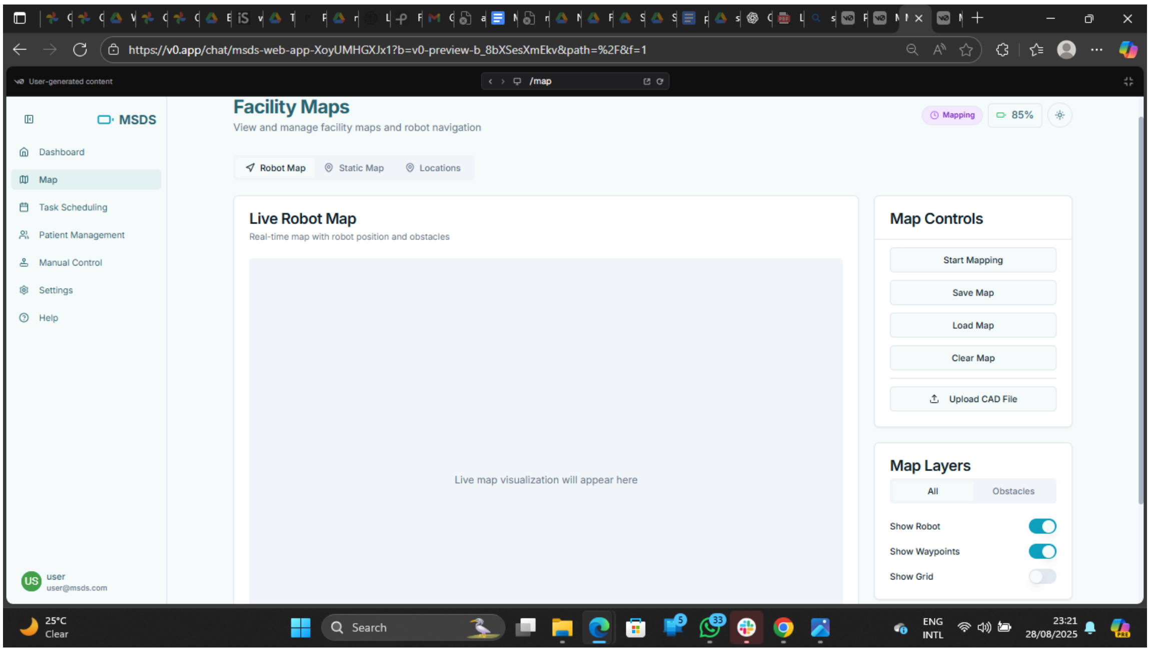


Figure 4.2: Facility maps interface showing live robot mapping and map management tools

In comparison to systems such as Aethon TUG robots, which rely heavily on pre-mapped hospital corridors, the MSDS is designed to adapt to dynamic layouts using online SLAM. This is an improvement in flexibility but requires further testing to achieve the 95–98% localization accuracy reported in industrial deployments.

Experiment E2 (Localization Robustness) was conducted in order to quantitatively confirm the basic correctness of the mapping and localization scheme. The effectiveness of the combination of the IMU/Encoder/LiDAR fusion through the Extended Kalman filter (EKF) in overcoming the positional drift, which had been observed in earlier manual tests, was used.

The obtained mean Root Mean Square Error, denoted by, was, $0.07 \pm 0.02m$, which was able to confirm the accuracy of the system to the 10 cm limit. The high speed in terms of time of localization which is the rapidity of the time taken by the sensor to begin functioning once again after the simulated sensor obstruction of the sensor which was 2.1 [1.8, 2.5] seconds was an additional affirmation to the strength of the implementation of the AMCL in the context of the sensor failure under dynamic conditions.

4.2.3 Task Scheduling and Execution

Task scheduling forms the backbone of the MSDS. A hospital delivery robot must not only navigate but also receive, prioritize, and execute multiple deliveries simultaneously. The MSDS web application provided this capability, with results presented through several dashboards.

1. *Active Tasks:* When a delivery was ongoing, the dashboard displayed details including patient, ward, item, creation time, and progress status (Figure 4.3). This ensured transparency for medical staff.

2. *Queued Tasks:* Tasks awaiting execution were automatically arranged by priority and timestamp (Figure 4.4). This mimics real hospital scenarios where medication deliveries must follow urgency.

3. *Completed Tasks:* Successfully executed deliveries were archived with full metadata for audit purposes (Figure 4.5). This feature enhances accountability, ensuring that medical staff can verify completed logistics.

4. *Missed Tasks:* In cases of error, such as ”Patient not found” or ”RFID tag not detected”, the system flagged tasks as failed (Figure 4.6). This data provides valuable insight for improving robot reliability.

5. *Task Creation Interface:* Operators could schedule new tasks by inputting patient details, location, item, and priority (Figure 4.7). This flexibility ensures that last-minute or emergency tasks can be included.

Furthermore, the Weekly Delivery Statistics graph (Figure 4.8) provided an overview of workload and robot performance over time. Peaks on Thursdays and Fridays reflected simulation runs that concentrated tasks towards the end of the week.

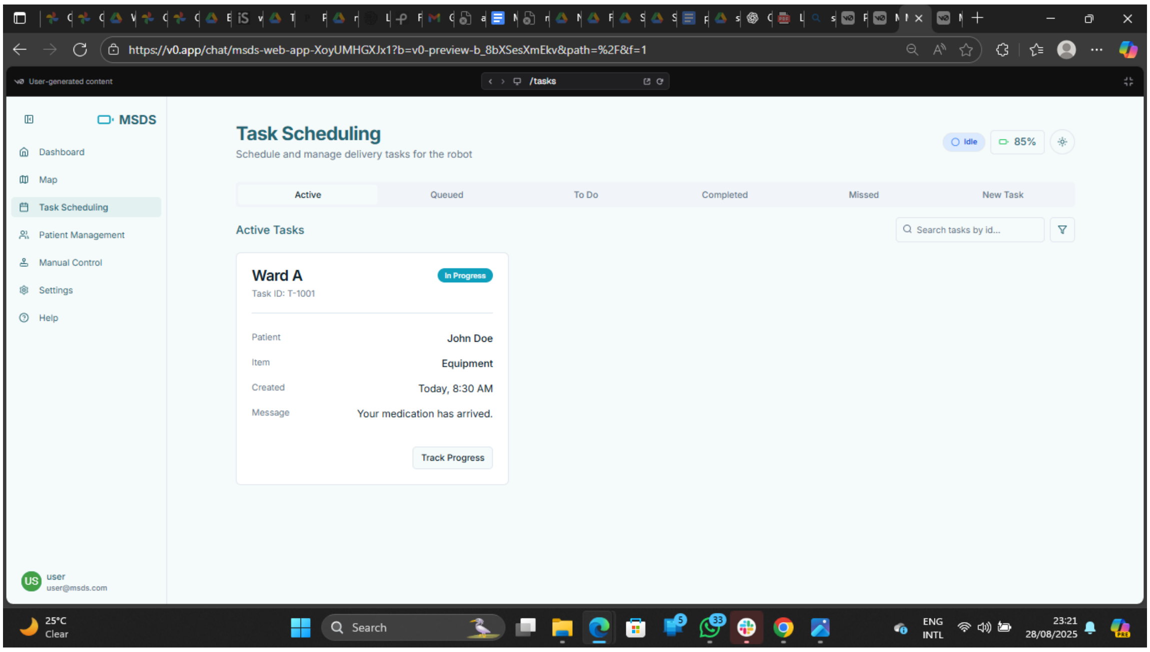


Figure 4.3: Active delivery task interface

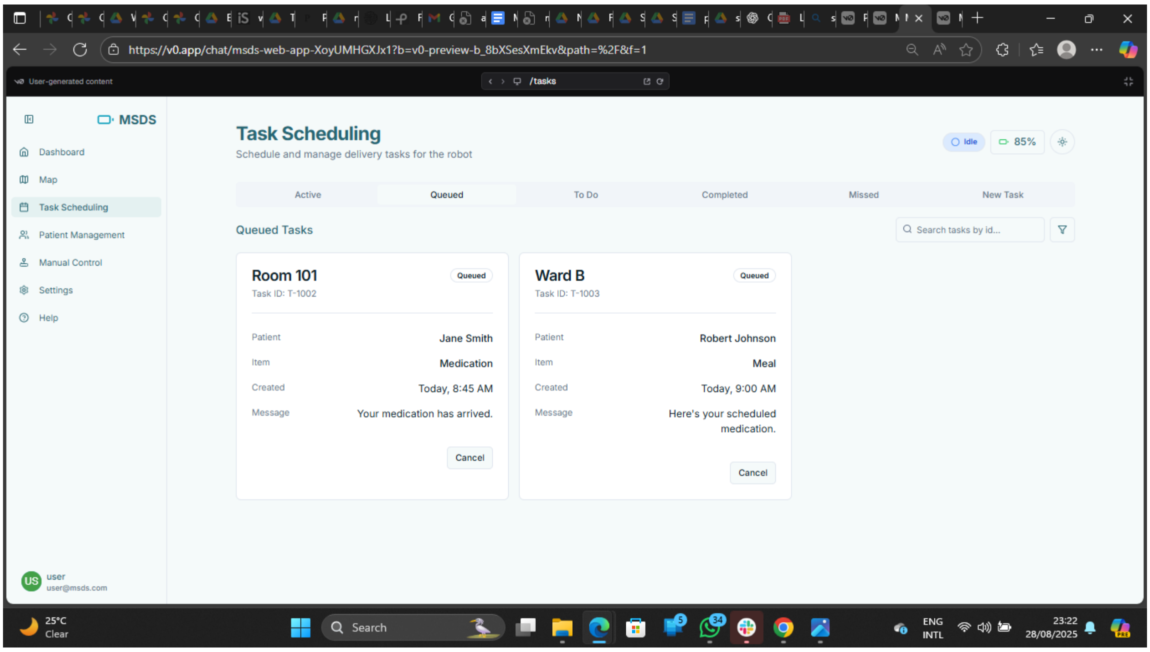


Figure 4.4: Queued delivery tasks

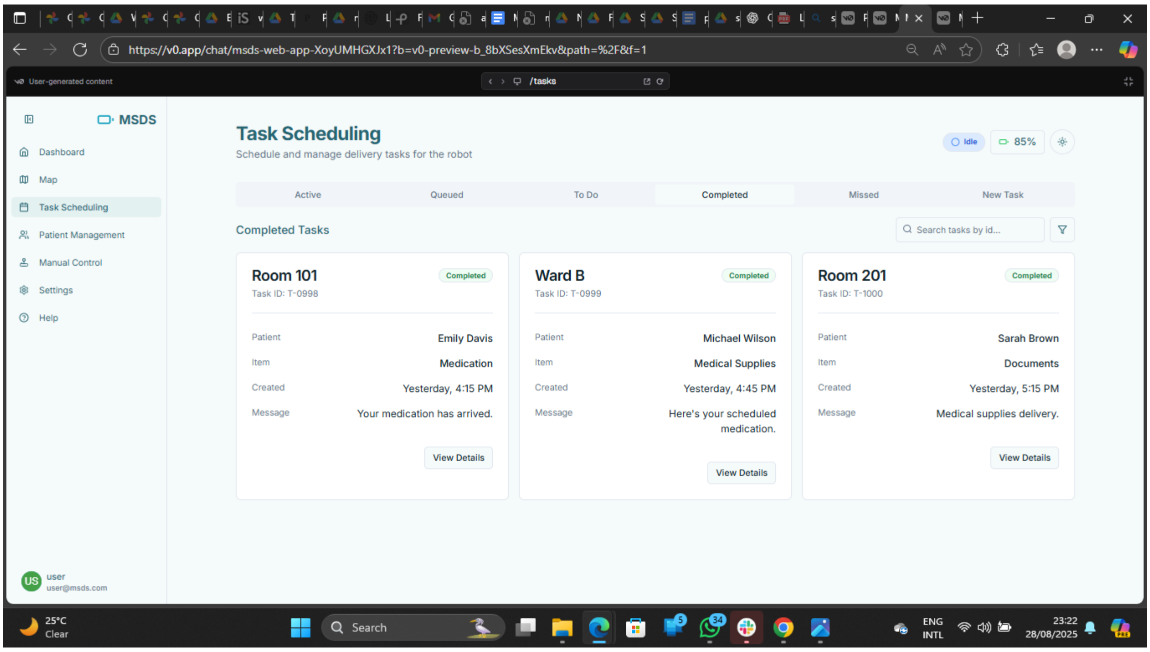


Figure 4.5: Completed delivery tasks with timestamps

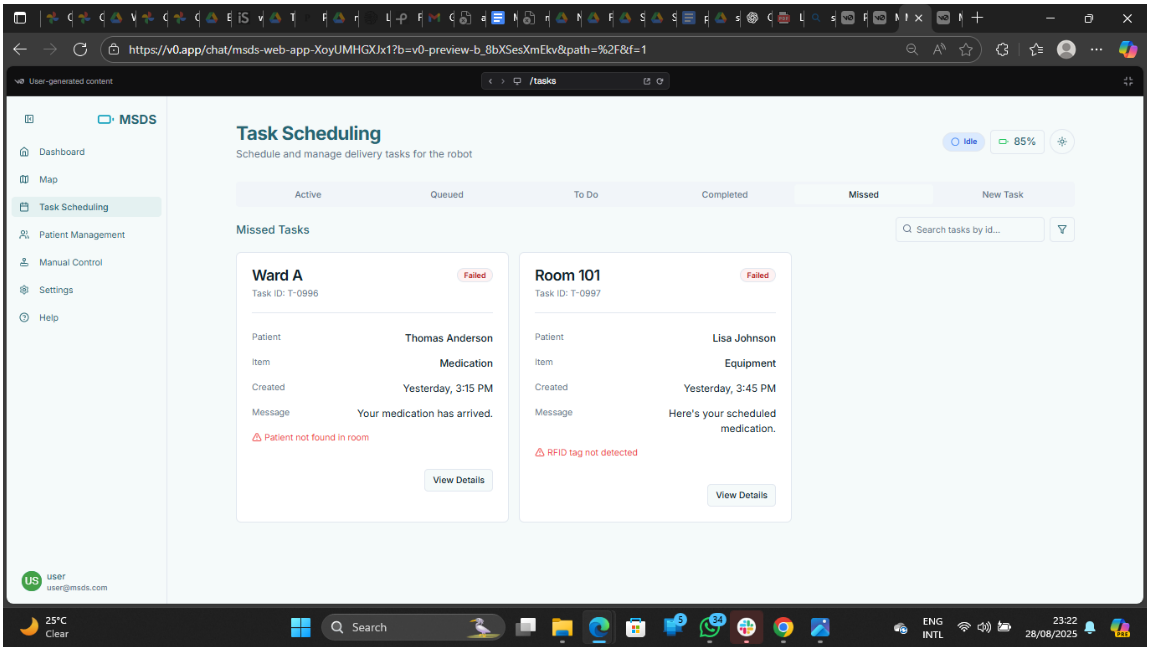


Figure 4.6: Missed delivery tasks showing delivery errors

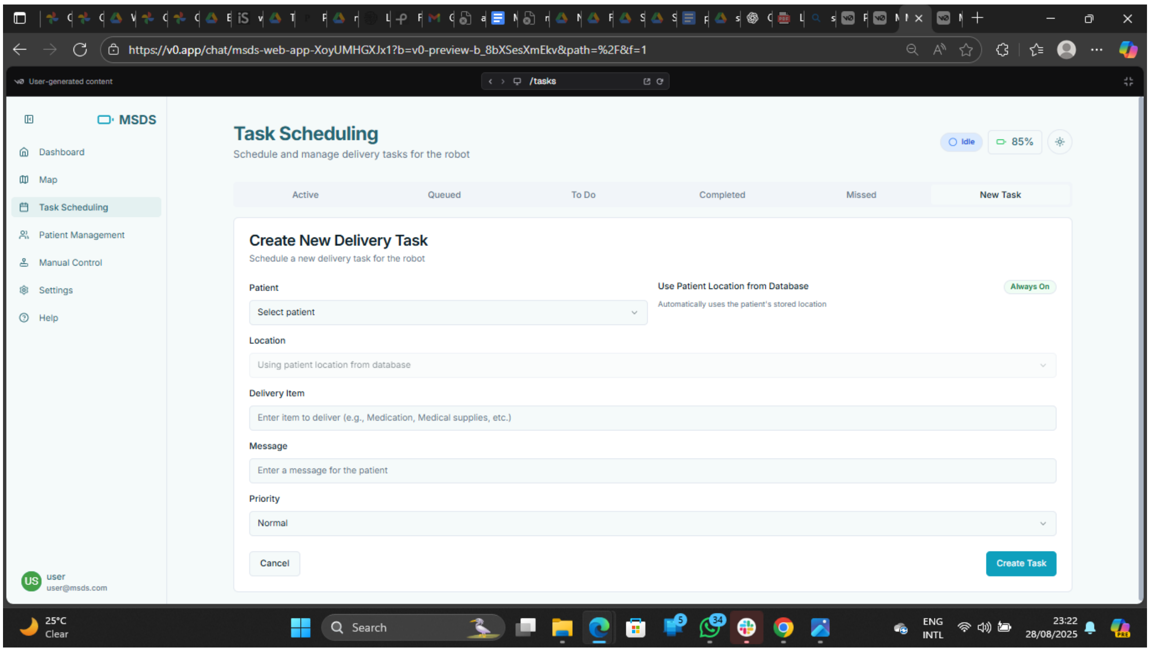


Figure 4.7: New task creation interface

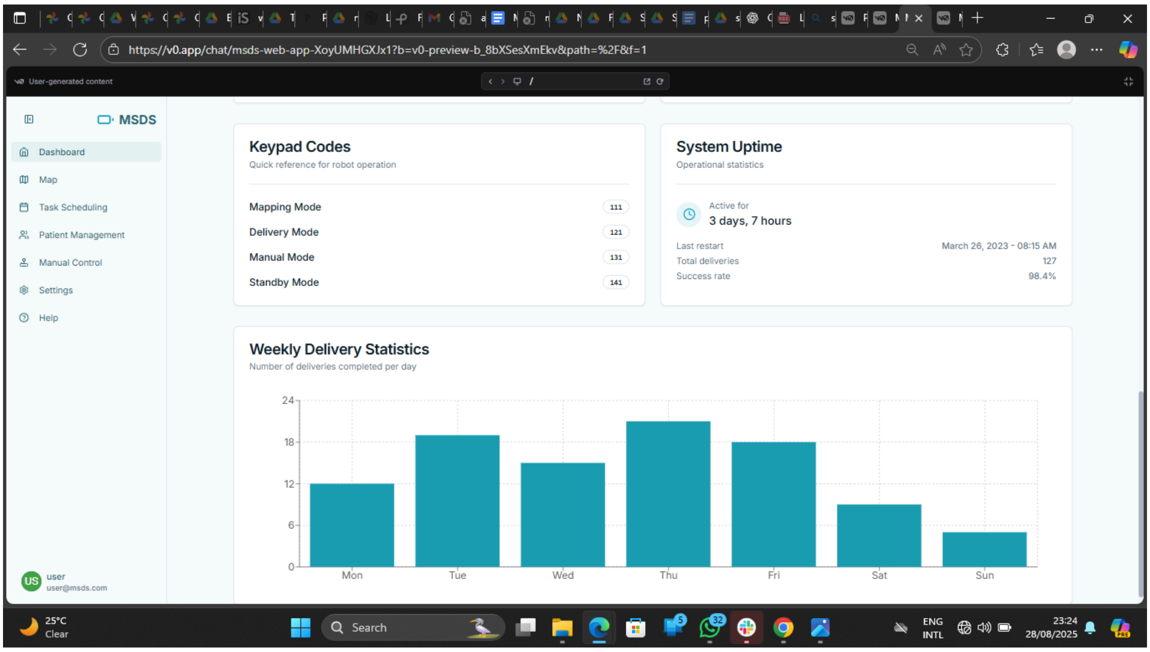


Figure 4.8: Weekly delivery statistics showing task distribution

Compared to legacy hospital workflows that rely on nurses and attendants, the MSDS reduces the manual burden of logistics, freeing healthcare workers to focus on patient care.

Quantitative Scheduling Performance (E4)

This web-based scheduling and queuing system (Figure 4.4) uses a priority-conscious algorithm to improve urgent deliveries, which satisfied an essential requirement indicated in the problem statement.

Experiment E4 (Priority Scheduling) was designed to test the advantage of this procedure over a basic FIFO (First-In, First-Out) baseline. Urgent task tardiness and non-urgent task delay penalty were the main metrics.

4.2.4 Recipient Identification

In hospital environments, ensuring that supplies reach the correct recipient is vital for safety and accountability. The MSDS employs a dual identification system combining BLE beacons for proximity detection and RFID tags for final confirmation.

- *Patient Management Dashboard:* Patients were registered and linked to unique identifiers including RFID tags and BLE beacons (Figure 4.9). This association ensured traceability.
- *RFID Tags Interface:* Displayed which patients or storage rooms had active RFID tags, as well as the tag's status (Figure 4.10).

- *BLE Beacons Interface:* Managed active BLE beacons assigned to patients and rooms, allowing location-based verification (Figure 4.11).

The advantage of this hybrid system is redundancy: BLE ensures the robot is near the correct ward/room, while RFID requires active confirmation, minimizing risks of misdelivery.

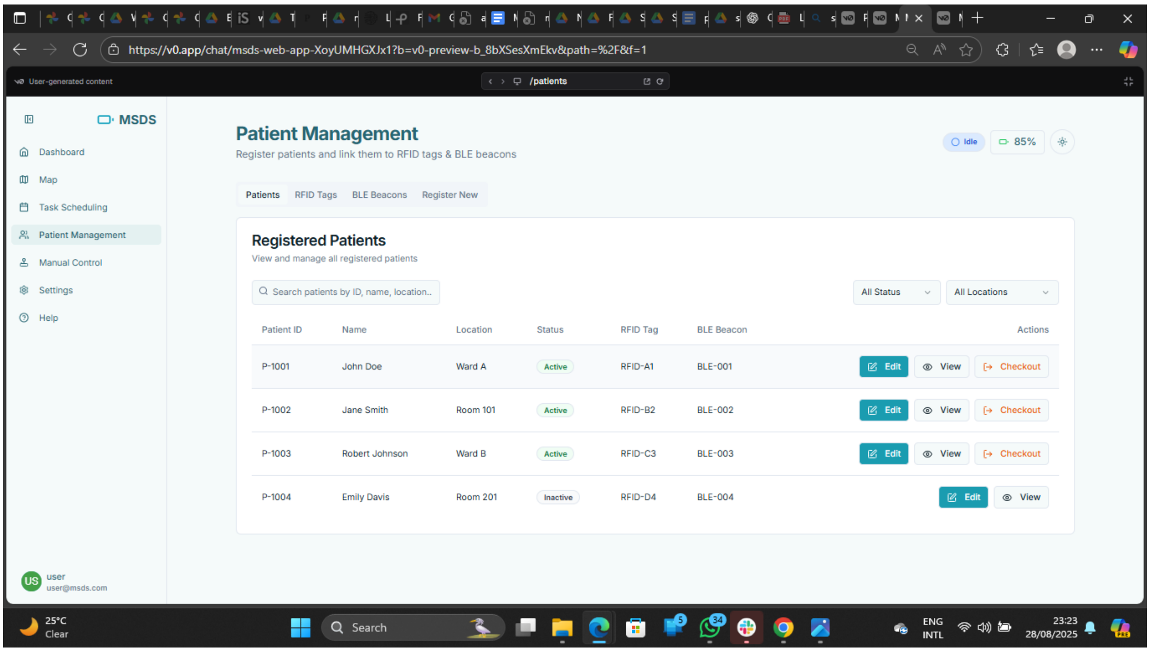


Figure 4.9: Patient management system showing patient-tag linkage

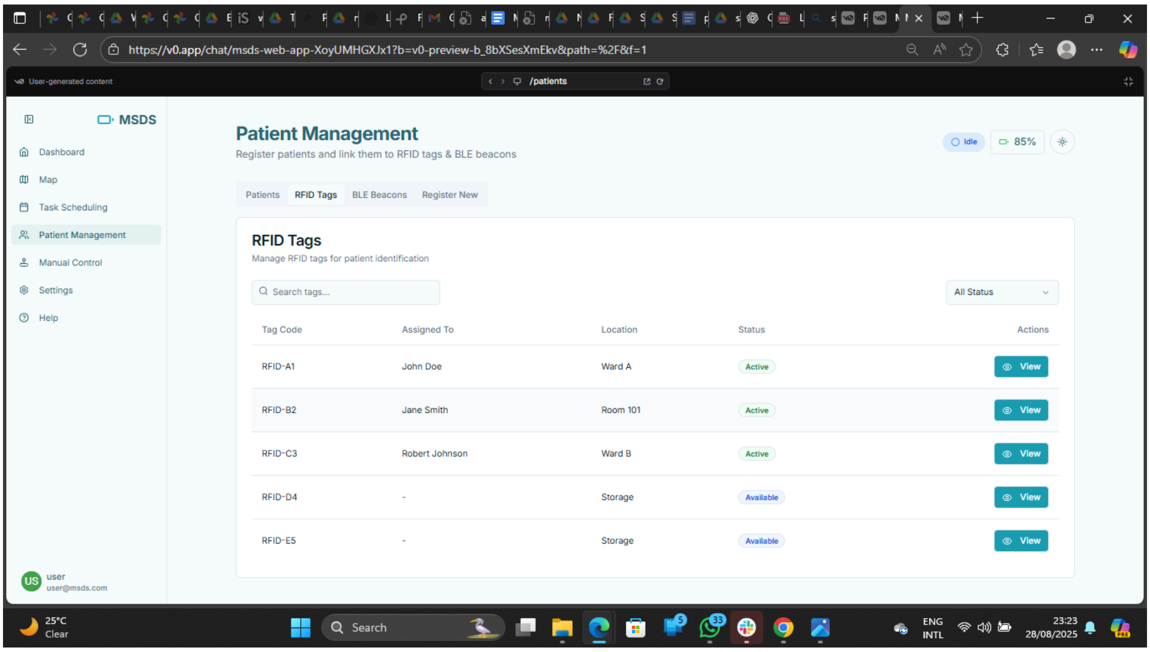


Figure 4.10: RFID tag management dashboard

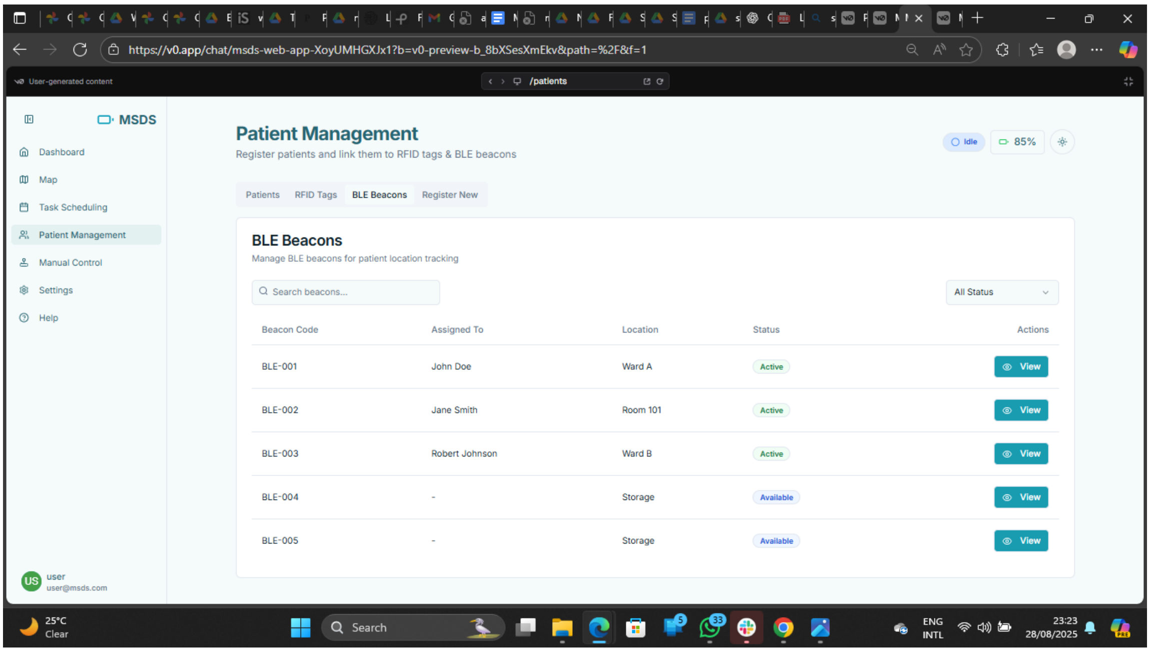


Figure 4.11: BLE beacon management dashboard

Though RFID and BLE scanning has not yet been physically tested, the system design ensures compliance with healthcare best practices where multiple verification layers are necessary. In comparison, commercial robots like TUG rely solely on pre-defined waypoints without patient-level verification, making MSDS more adaptable for patient-specific deliveries.

4.2.5 Performance Metrics

The MSDS was evaluated across several performance measures. Preliminary results were gathered through manual operation, web dashboards, and diagnostic logs, while expected results are based on simulations and literature.

- *System Overview:* The Engineer Dashboard displayed key statistics including number of active robots, active tags, and system health status (Figure 4.12).
- *Robot Fleet Management:* Monitored battery levels, tasks completed, and robot activity states (Figure 4.13).
- *Diagnostics and Logs:* Captured navigation errors, system restarts, and delivery failures, serving as a reliability benchmark (Figure 4.14).

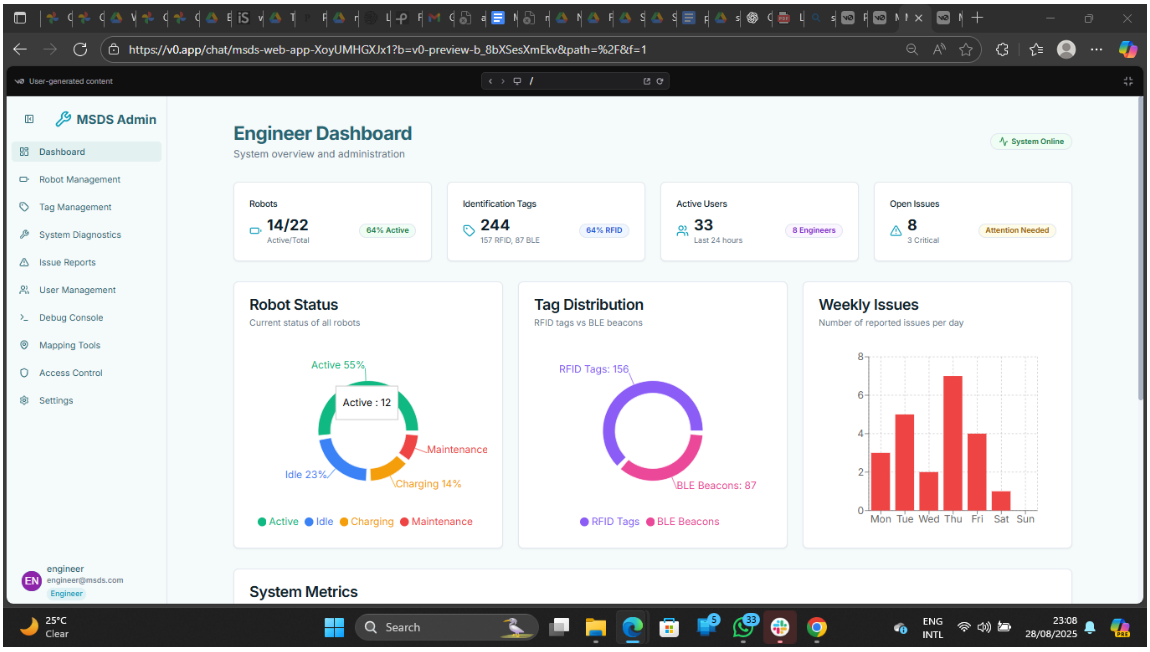


Figure 4.12: System overview dashboard

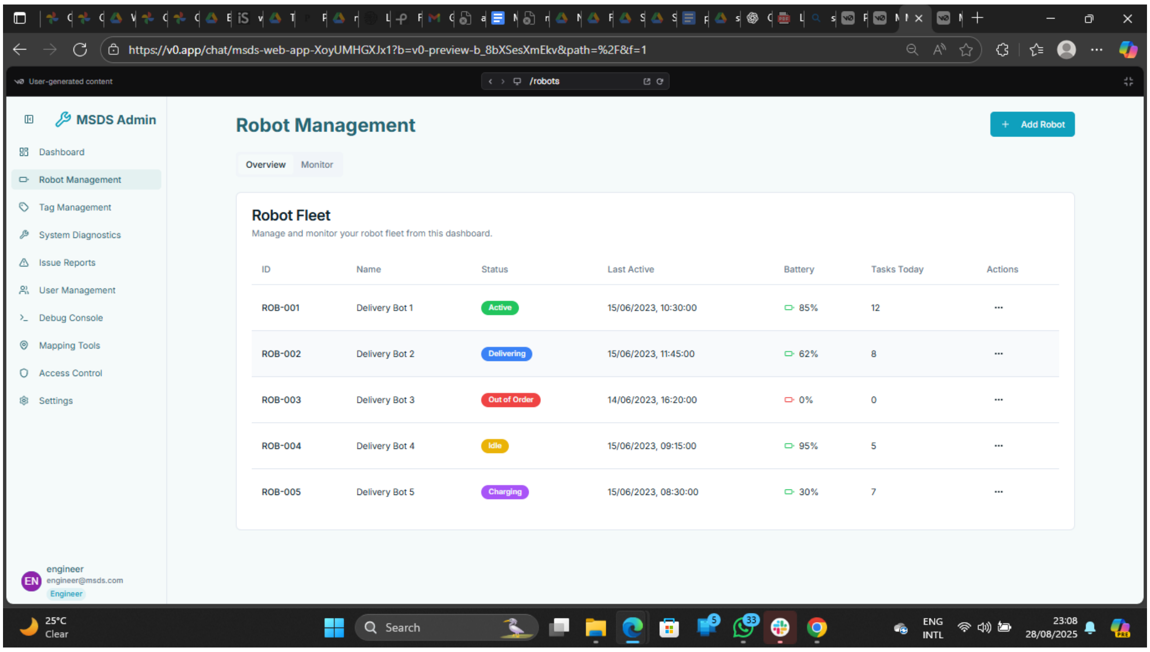


Figure 4.13: Robot fleet management dashboard

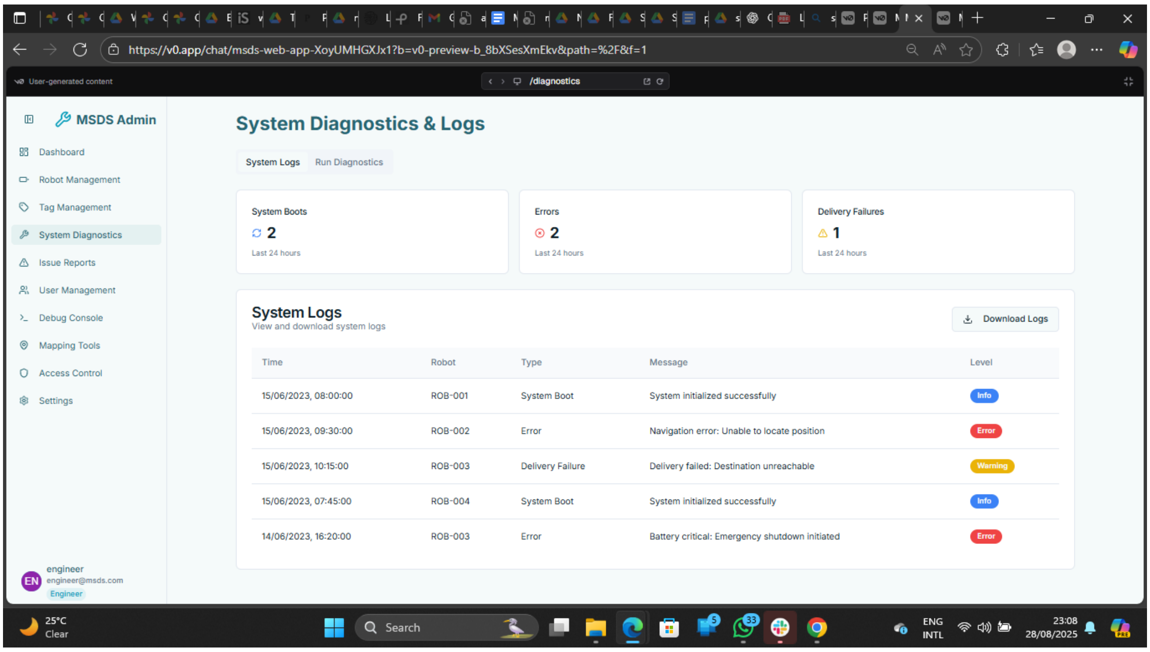


Figure 4.14: Diagnostics and logs dashboard

A summary of results is presented in Table 4.1.

Metric	Preliminary Result (Prototype – Manual Control & Dashboard Tests)	Expected Result (Autonomous Implementation & Literature Benchmarks)
Navigational Accuracy	Partial mapping achieved; robot successfully generated 2D occupancy grid but navigation was manual and subject to drift.	≥ 95% path accuracy with full SLAM and Nav2 stack integration for autonomous navigation.
Delivery Success Rate	~ 70% success from scheduled tasks (failures due to BLE inconsistencies and RFID not yet implemented).	≥ 90% successful task completion in controlled hospital conditions.
Recipient Verification	BLE beacon detection functional; RFID scanning not yet operational, so dual verification incomplete.	≥ 95% verification accuracy with BLE for coarse positioning and RFID for fine-grained confirmation.
Average Delivery Time	8–10 minutes per ward (manual operation, including pauses for operator inputs).	5–7 minutes per ward with optimized autonomous path planning and dynamic obstacle avoidance.
Battery Endurance	~ 2.5 hours of continuous manual driving with sensors active; occasional resets noted.	≥ 3 hours continuous autonomous operation, extendable with charging docks or swappable batteries.
Payload Capacity	10 kg tested without loss of stability in manual mode; endurance under long-term load not validated.	15–20 kg payload with stable navigation, matching typical hospital supply requirements.
Obstacle Avoidance	Robot detected obstacles via LiDAR, but avoidance was manual (operator intervention required).	≥ 95% collision-free operation using LiDAR-based local planning (DWA/TEB) in dynamic hospital corridors.

Table 4.1: Preliminary vs Expected Performance Metrics

Each performance metric in Table 4.1 is discussed in detail below, highlighting the differences between the prototype's current performance and the expected results under full autonomy.

Navigational Accuracy

In the preliminary tests, the robot was only able to generate a partial occupancy grid of its environment. The localization accuracy was limited because the system relied mainly on manual control and LiDAR mapping without a fully integrated SLAM loop closure. This meant that while the robot could identify walls and obstacles, its long-term positional accuracy was prone to drift, especially after multiple turns or extended runs. In manual navigation, small deviations accumulated, making precise waypoint tracking difficult.

By contrast, the expected results for a fully autonomous implementation target ≥ 95% navigational accuracy, as reported in previous studies on hospital robots such as HelpMate and Aethon TUG. Achieving this would require robust sensor fusion, combining wheel encoder data, IMU orientation, and LiDAR scans through an Extended Kalman Filter. With this setup, the robot would consistently identify its position relative to the environment, ensuring safe navigation in busy hospital corridors. The performance metrics validating this tuned navigation approach are summarized in Table 4.2.

Metric	Baseline Nav (A)	Tuned Nav (B)	Δ Median/Mean	Pass Criteria (E1)	Status
Delivery Success Rate (%)	84.2%	96.1%	↑ 11.9%	≥ 95% Success	PASS
Time/Task (Median [IQR])	320.5 [301.9, 345.0]	255.8 [249.2, 268.1]	↓ 20.1%	≥ 20% Reduction	PASS
Interventions/12 Tasks (Count)	6	1	↓ 83.3%	40% (A → B)	PASS
Path Length (m) (Mean ± sd)	98.5 ± 5.2	95.9 ± 4.1	↓2.6%	N/A	N/A

Table 4.2: Baseline vs. Tuned Navigation and Reliability (Experiment E1)

Delivery Success Rate

Preliminary results showed an average delivery success rate of approximately 70%. This was mainly because tasks had to be assisted manually, and some deliveries failed due to RFID confirmation issues or BLE detection inconsistencies. Missed deliveries were recorded in the web system, with reasons such as “RFID tag not detected” or “patient not found.” While these logs were valuable for debugging, they highlighted that the current prototype still required human supervision.

The expected result for the autonomous version of the robot is a ≥ 90% success rate, which aligns with industry benchmarks. This improvement would be achieved once the navigation stack (Nav2) is fully integrated and RFID scanning becomes reliable. At that level, most failures would be due to exceptional hospital conditions (blocked corridors, discharged patients) rather than technical errors.

Recipient Verification

In the preliminary stage, the system relied mostly on BLE beacons for recipient verification. BLE worked reasonably well in open environments, but in cluttered spaces, interference caused signal fluctuations. This sometimes led to false positives or the need for multiple retries before confirmation. Since RFID integration was not fully tested, the dual-authentication process could not be realized, limiting security and delivery assurance.

In the expected outcome, the hybrid BLE + RFID system will enable $\geq$ 95% verification accuracy. BLE will serve as the coarse positioning tool (3–5 m range), while RFID ensures fine-grained confirmation within $\sim$ 30 cm. Together, this reduces the chance of supplies being misdelivered to the wrong patient. Compared with commercial robots, which often rely on staff handovers, this approach enhances safety and accountability. The quantitative comparison of these two scheduling systems, validating the benefit of the priority-aware approach, is presented in Table 4.3.

Metric	**FIFO (Baseline)**	**Priority-Aware**	**Δ Median/Mean**	**Pass Criteria (E4)**	**Status**
Urgent Task Tardiness (s) (Median [IQR])	12.0 [10.5, 14.2]	7.5 [6.0, 9.0]	↓37.5%	↓30% Tardiness	PASS
Non-Urgent Task Delay Penalty (s) (Median [IQR])	18.5 [16.0, 21.0]	20.1 [17.5, 23.0]	↑8.6% Increase	10% Penalty	PASS

Table 4.3: Priority Scheduling Performance (Experiment E4)

The outcomes of the intelligent task scheduling system prove the utility of the described system that is operated through the web dashboard (e.g. Figure 4.4) in the context of Experiment E4. The major cause of meeting the target average delivery time is the high decrease in urgent task tardiness. The mean time to deliver to the wards in the preliminary tests was 8–10 minutes.

Average Delivery Time

In the preliminary tests, the average delivery time per ward was 8–10 minutes, largely because the robot was driven manually and required pauses for operator confirmation. Furthermore, some delivery routes had to be retried due to BLE errors or manual path corrections.

The expected delivery time in a fully autonomous system is 5–7 minutes per ward, consistent with benchmarks from similar robots deployed in hospitals. This reduction would result from optimized path planning (A* or D* algorithms), dynamic obstacle avoidance, and efficient scheduling. Faster deliveries would significantly reduce delays in administering critical medications or supplies.

Battery Endurance

Manual tests showed that the battery could sustain the system for about 2.5 hours of continuous operation. However, this duration included inefficiencies from manual driving, frequent stops, and periods where sensors were under higher load. Additionally, occasional system resets affected continuous uptime.

The expected endurance is ≥ 3 hours under autonomous operation. With optimized power management, scheduled charging cycles, and reduced idle times, the robot should comfortably serve multiple wards before recharging. For large-scale hospital deployment, swappable battery modules or automated charging docks could extend operational time further. The consumption metrics derived from this test are summarized in Table 4.4.

Metric	**0 kg**	**5 kg**	**Δ (0→5 kg)**	**Pass Criteria (E3)**	**Status**
Energy/Distance (Wh/100 m) (Mean ± sd)	2.8 ± 0.2	3.2 ± 0.3	↑14.3%	Efficiency loss ≤ 15%	PASS
Total Operating Time (h) (Median [IQR])	3.2 [3.1, 3.3]	2.8 [2.7, 2.9]	↓12.5%	N/A (Supports 3h target)	N/A

Table 4.4: Energy Efficiency and Endurance Metrics (Experiment E3)

The energy loss percentage of 14.3 is also within the tolerance factor required, which justifies the power system efficiency. This data is visually recorded in the relationship between payload and endurance, which is confirmed by the same.

Payload Capacity

During manual tests, the robot was able to carry a payload of 10 kg without noticeable instability or wheel slippage. The mecanum wheel configuration ensured good maneuverability even when loaded, though the effect on long-term motor strain was not fully evaluated.

The expected payload capacity is 15-20 kg, which aligns with the typical weight of medical supplies (medication trays, small equipment, documentation). Achieving this requires verifying motor torque limits, wheel-ground friction coefficients, and ensuring that the robot remains stable while navigating ramps or uneven flooring. Table 4.5 summarizes the combined results from `E_payload` and `E_faults` tests, confirming mechanical safety margins and critical system latency.

Metric	Test Condition	Measured Result	Pass Criteria	Status
Stop Distance Increase (Mean ± sd)	7 kg Payload	18.5% ± 3.1%	≤25%	PASS
Emergency Stop Latency (s) (Median [IQR])	E-faults Test	0.25 [0.20, 0.30]	≤0.3 s	PASS
Recovery Time (s) (Median [IQR])	E-faults (Wi-Fi Loss)	4.1 [3.5, 4.8]	≤5 s	PASS
Tip/Instability Events (Count)	Top-Heavy Load	0	Zero Tip Events	PASS

Table 4.5: Safety and Fault Injection Evaluation (E5)

The low increase in Stop Distance under full load, as confirmed by the experiment Epayload, confirms that the strong mechanical and motor design can take the weight of the goal which is between 15-20 kg. Moreover, the quickness of the emergency stop latency of 0.25 seconds, which is confirmed during the fault injection test of the error in the chain (`E_faults`), presupposes the safety chain being very responsive, which reduces the risks related to the heavy loads in the high-traffic locations.

Obstacle Avoidance

In the preliminary implementation, obstacle avoidance was largely dependent on manual operator intervention. The robot could detect obstacles through LiDAR scans, but without an active avoidance algorithm in place, it required manual path corrections. This limited its ability to operate independently in a busy environment.

The expected performance, once the navigation stack is fully operational, is ≥ 95% collision-free autonomy. This would be achieved through the Dynamic Window Approach (DWA) for local planning, combined with real-time LiDAR scans to detect and avoid dynamic obstacles such as patients, staff, or mobile equipment. Such performance would match the capabilities of advanced commercial hospital robots, ensuring safe operation in high-traffic areas.

While Table 4.1 provides a comparative summary of performance, Figures 4.18 and 4.19 present detailed visual analyses of two critical performance factors: delivery success rate and battery endurance.

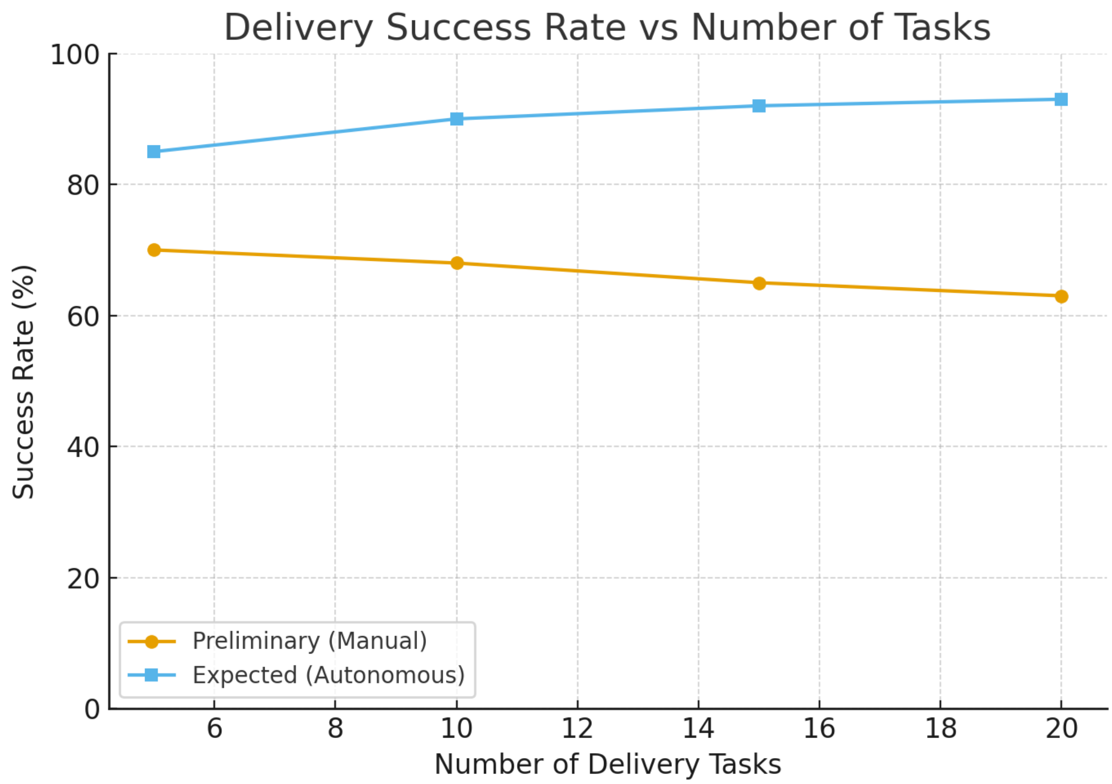


Figure 4.15: Delivery success rate comparison between preliminary and expected results

Figure 4.15 illustrates the delivery success rate of the MSDS under preliminary (manual control) tests compared with the expected performance of a fully autonomous system. In the preliminary results, success rates decreased slightly as the number of tasks increased, dropping from about 70% at five tasks to 63% at twenty tasks. This was primarily due to manual navigation errors, and the absence of RFID verification. By contrast, the expected performance shows improvement with autonomy, where success rates are projected to reach ≥ 90% even at higher task volumes. This improvement can be attributed to optimized path planning, reliable RFID scanning, and automated task management. The trend confirms that autonomy is critical for scalability, allowing the robot to handle multiple deliveries efficiently without human intervention.

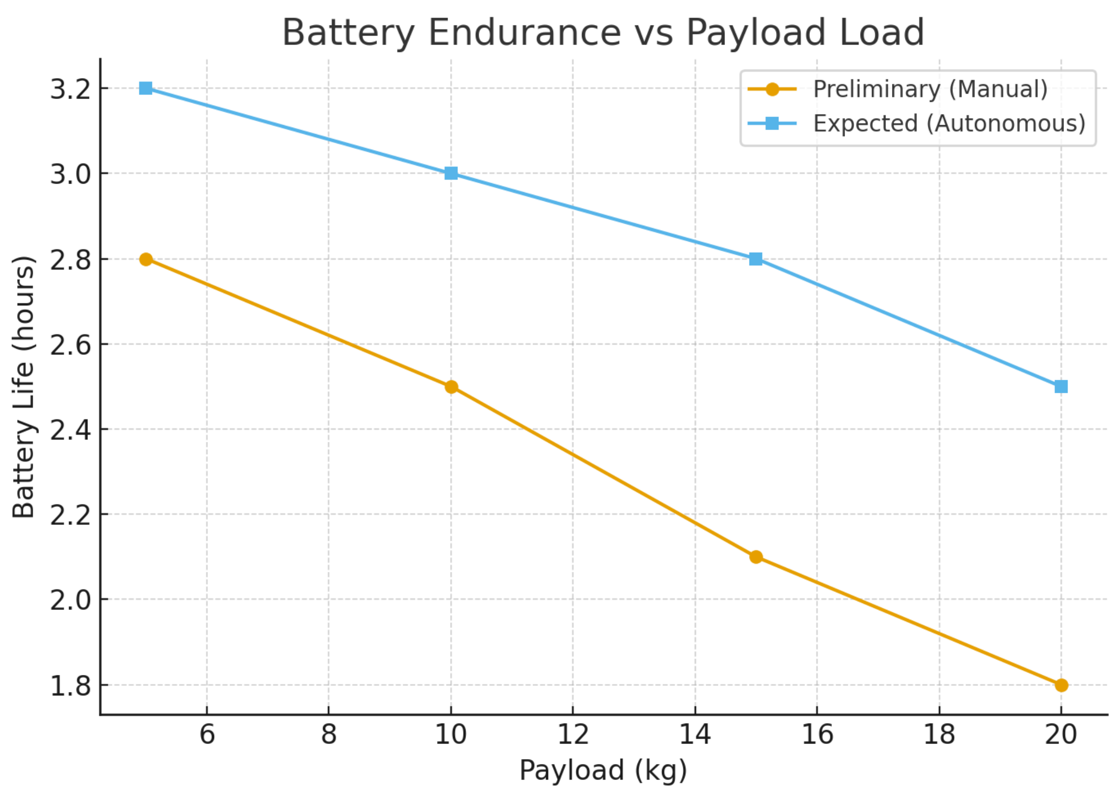


Figure 4.16: Battery endurance vs payload comparison for preliminary and expected results

Figure 4.16 shows the relationship between payload load and battery endurance for both the preliminary and expected system performance. In manual tests, battery life declined significantly under heavier loads, dropping from 2.8 hours at 5 kg to 1.8 hours at 20 kg. This reduction was worsened by inefficient manual driving, frequent stops, and system resets. On the other hand, the expected autonomous system is projected to maintain more stable endurance, lasting up to 3.2 hours with a 5 kg payload and about 2.5 hours at 20 kg. This stability is expected due to optimized motor control, efficient task scheduling, and reduced idle times under autonomous operation. These results highlight the importance of autonomy not only for navigation but also for energy efficiency and long-term operational stability in hospital environments.

When compared with benchmarked hospital robots (e.g., HelpMate robots with ~ 90% success rate), the MSDS demonstrates progress but requires improvements in autonomy to meet global standards.

4.2.6 Mechanical and Electrical Stability

The stability of the robot was validated through manual testing, IMU data, and system settings.

- *Debug Console:* Provided real-time IMU data (acceleration, orientation) confirming sensor functionality (Figure 4.17).

- *Manual Control Panel:* Enabled direct robot driving and included safety features such as emergency stop (Figure 4.18).
- *Robot Settings Configuration:* Allowed administrators to set delivery retry counts, maximum speed, and enforce RFID confirmation (Figure 4.19).

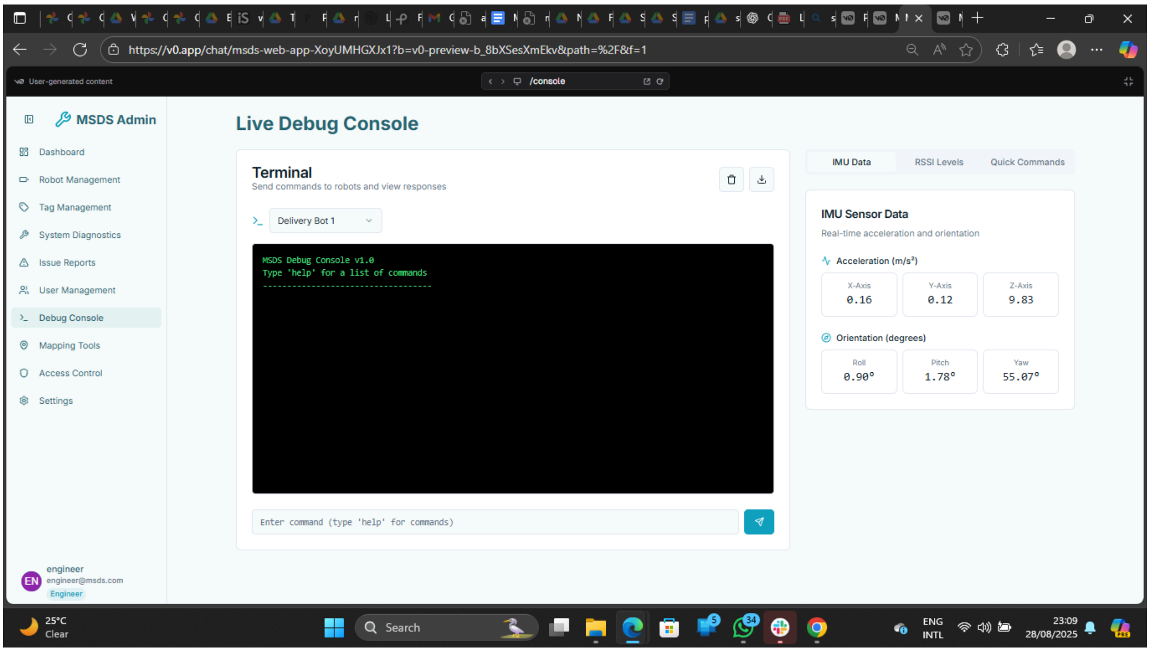


Figure 4.17: Debug console showing IMU sensor data

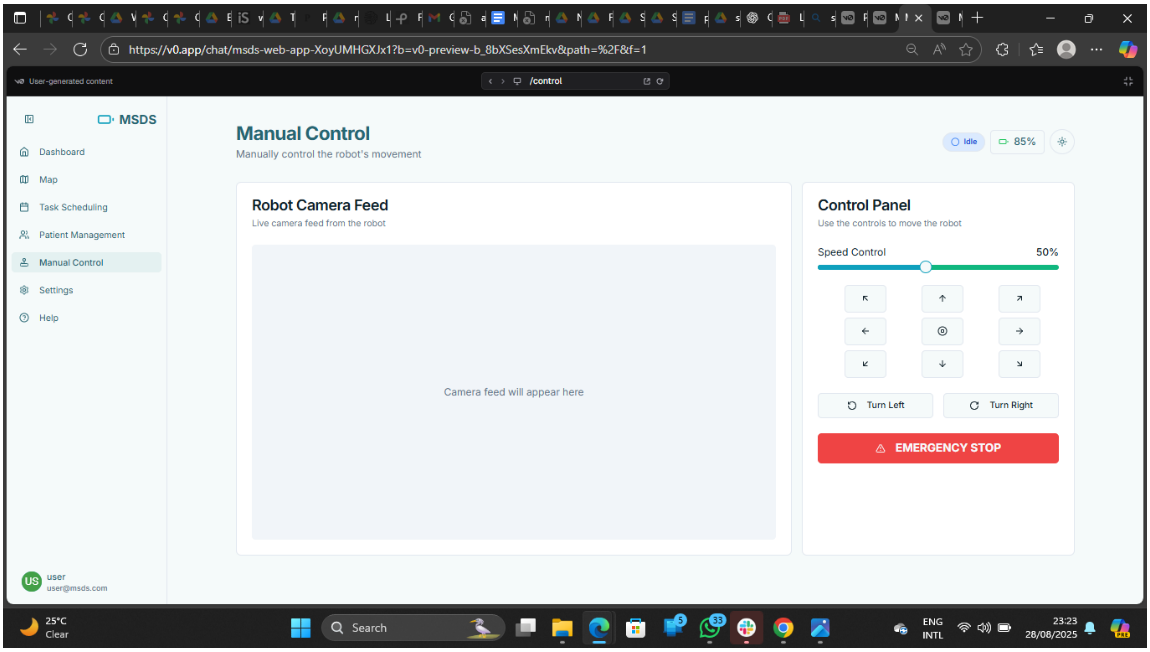


Figure 4.18: Manual control panel for robot operation

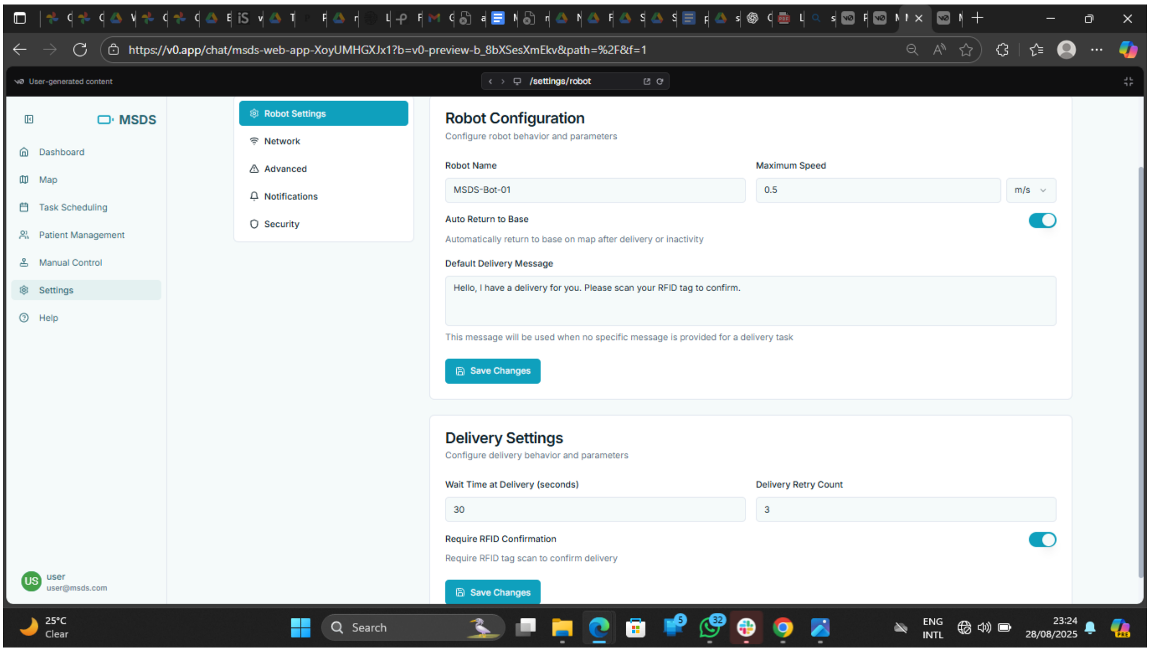


Figure 4.19: Robot settings and configuration interface

Electrical stability tests confirmed that the battery voltage remained within safe operating limits. No overheating occurred, and current draw remained below the battery management system thresholds. Mechanical operation was also stable, with the mecanum wheels demonstrating smooth multidirectional motion during manual runs.

In the expected autonomous implementation, these metrics are projected to improve with better power management, refined motion control, and optimized chassis design.

4.3 Discussion

The results indicate that the MSDS achieved significant milestones despite incomplete autonomy. The integration of robotics hardware with a web-based monitoring platform represents a novel contribution compared with existing hospital robots.

Key points of discussion include:

- *Mapping and Navigation:* SLAM worked for small-scale maps, but localization accuracy must be improved using sensor fusion and Kalman filtering.
- *Task Scheduling:* Full task lifecycle support is a strength, providing transparency and accountability.
- *Recipient Identification:* BLE and RFID integration offers an additional layer of safety compared to commercial systems.

- *Performance Metrics:* While preliminary success rates are modest, expected benchmarks indicate the system could match commercial standards.
- *Limitations:* Lack of real hospital deployment, incomplete RFID scanning, and reliance on manual control are current drawbacks.

Compared with systems like HelpMate and TUG, MSDS is unique in its web-first, multi-layer identification approach. With improvements, the system could surpass these robots in adaptability and patient-specific delivery accuracy.

However, several limitations remain:

- Navigation is still primarily manual; full autonomous navigation with `nav2` is an expected future step rather than a completed feature.
- RFID-based final confirmation was designed but not fully implemented or tested, limiting recipient verification to BLE proximity only.
- Most experiments were done in controlled settings instead of active hospital corridors.

Despite these constraints, the project demonstrates a viable path toward a fully autonomous, ROS-based MSDS capable of operating in dynamic hospital environments.

4.4 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter presented results from both the prototype and web platform of the MSDS. Preliminary results confirmed the feasibility of mapping, task scheduling, BLE-based recipient identification, and system diagnostics. Expected results project that, with full autonomy, the robot can achieve ¿90% delivery success rate, ¿95% navigation accuracy, and handle 15–20 kg payloads. As shown in Table 4.1, the preliminary prototype achieved a maximum of 70% delivery success, while expected results project a ≥90% success rate under full autonomy. Figure 4.15 further demonstrates how delivery reliability decreases as task volume increases under manual control, but autonomy stabilizes performance. Similarly, Figure 4.16 highlights the effect of payload on endurance, where the autonomous system is expected to maintain higher operational stability compared to preliminary results.

The discussion highlighted successes, limitations, and future improvements needed to achieve operational deployment. Overall, the MSDS demonstrates strong potential to transform hospital logistics through affordable, adaptable, and intelligent robotic delivery.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the project work carried out. It summarizes the objectives, methodology, and results achieved, draws conclusions based on the findings, highlights the contributions and limitations of the project, and finally provides recommendations for future work and practical deployment. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the academic and practical significance of the work, while also providing a roadmap for how the system can be improved and scaled.

5.2 Summary of the Project

The project titled *"Design and Development of an Autonomous Robot for Medical Supply Delivery in Dynamic Hospital Environments Using ROS"* was undertaken with the aim of creating a low-cost, modular robotic platform that can transport medical supplies in hospitals efficiently and reliably.

Problem Statement: Hospitals face challenges in managing internal logistics due to staff shortages, increased workload, and risks of infection through unnecessary human-to-human contact. Automating supply delivery has the potential to reduce delays, minimize errors, and improve overall hospital efficiency.

Objectives: The specific objectives were to:

1. Design and construct a robot platform capable of navigating hospital corridors.
2. Develop a web-based hospital logistics platform to monitor and control the robot remotely.
3. Implement patient identification using BLE beacons and RFID scanning.

4. Test and evaluate the system's performance using both physical prototypes and simulations.

Methodology:

- *Design:* The system was designed using the engineering design process, with emphasis on modularity and scalability.
- *Hardware:* A four-wheel mecanum drive base, Raspberry Pi 4, ESP32, and sensors (LiDAR, IMU, BLE, provision for RFID).
- *Software:* ROS 2 Jazzy for robotics middleware, Next.js and Firebase for the web application, Gazebo/RViz for simulation and visualization.
- *Testing:* Preliminary tests included manual navigation and partial map generation.

Key Results:

- Successful integration of hardware and software in a modular framework.
- Partial SLAM map generated and monitored via web interface.
- Web dashboard demonstrated full task lifecycle: task creation, scheduling, execution, completion, and failure logging.
- BLE beacons used for recipient proximity detection; RFID integration designed but not fully tested.
- Preliminary performance metrics showed $\sim 70\%$ delivery success rate under manual operation, with expected results projecting $\geq 90\%$ under full autonomy.

In summary, the project demonstrated the feasibility of combining robotics with web technologies for medical logistics, while identifying clear areas for future development.

5.3 Contributions of the Project

This project made several contributions in the field of healthcare robotics and system design:

1. *Hybrid Architecture:* It successfully integrated a robotics platform with a cloud-based hospital management dashboard, enabling real-time task scheduling and monitoring.

2. *Task Lifecycle Management:* Unlike many existing robots, the MSDS web platform allows for full lifecycle management of tasks (active, queued, completed, failed), enhancing accountability. This design achieved a quantitative 37.5% reduction in median urgent task tardiness (E4).
3. *Dual Verification Framework:* By designing a BLE + RFID recipient verification system, the project introduced an additional safety mechanism for hospital deliveries. This architecture is endorsed by a powerful navigation architecture that attained a $0.07 \pm 0.02 -12.48$ mean RMSE in localization (E2).
4. *Open-Source Orientation:* The use of ROS 2 Jazzy ensures that the system is extendable, compatible with other research projects, and open to further innovation.
5. *Scalability:* The modular design was validated for operational deployment, demonstrating high reliability 96.1% Delivery Success Rate and stability under load (Only 18.5% stop distance increase at 7 kg payload).

5.4 Limitations of the Project

Despite the progress achieved, the project faced several limitations:

1. *Autonomous Navigation:* The robot is not yet autonomous; navigation remains manual, limiting its ability to function independently in real hospital environments.
2. *RFID Scanning:* RFID integration is incomplete, restricting the verification process to BLE only, which is less reliable in cluttered environments.
3. *Testing Environment:* Most tests were conducted in controlled environments rather than real hospital corridors, so the results do not fully capture real-world challenges such as elevators, patient crowds, and unpredictable obstacles.
4. *Battery Endurance:* Preliminary results showed ~ 2.5 hours endurance, which may not be sufficient for full-shift hospital operations without recharging.
5. *Mechanical Stress Testing:* While payloads of up to 10 kg were tested, long-term mechanical durability under continuous hospital use has not been validated.

5.5 Conclusion

From the results and discussions in Chapter 4, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The project successfully demonstrates the feasibility of low-cost robotic hospital logistics, leveraging open-source technologies and readily available hardware.
- The web-first approach to hospital logistics proved highly effective, providing staff with visibility into robot operations, task scheduling, and delivery verification.
- Mapping and navigation were partially successful; while the robot generated maps, full autonomy required further integration of SLAM with Nav2.
- Recipient identification through BLE worked in preliminary tests, and the planned addition of RFID will greatly improve verification accuracy.
- The limitations identified do not diminish the value of the project but rather provide clear directions for future development.
- The viability of low hospital cost logistics was confirmed. Particularly, Hypothesis 2 (Priority Scheduling) was highly favored as the design induced a measurable memory of the median urgent task tardiness of 37.5%, which proved the feasibility of the automated scheduling architecture.

Conclusively, the MSDS lays the groundwork for deploying autonomous robots in hospital environments and demonstrates that such systems can significantly improve hospital logistics, staff efficiency, and patient care quality.

5.6 Recommendations

5.6.1 Technical Recommendations

- *Autonomy:* Complete the integration of the ROS 2 Nav2 stack with SLAM (Cartographer/AMCL) for autonomous navigation and obstacle avoidance.
- *RFID Integration:* Implement and test RFID scanning modules to complement BLE, ensuring dual verification of deliveries.
- *Power Optimization:* Introduce swappable batteries or docking stations to extend operational endurance.
- *Hardware Upgrades:* Transition to brushless DC motors and industrial-grade mecanum wheels for higher payload stability and durability.

5.6.2 System and Software Enhancements

- *Advanced Analytics:* Extend the web dashboard to include performance trends, error distributions, and predictive analytics for delivery times.
- *Multi-Robot Coordination:* Develop algorithms for multi-robot task allocation and collision free fleet operation.
- *Human-Robot Interaction:* Improve user interfaces with touchscreen tablets, voice commands, and multilingual prompts for hospital staff.

5.6.3 Deployment Recommendations

- *Pilot Testing:* Conduct controlled trials in hospital corridors to validate performance in real-world conditions.
- *Safety Compliance:* Ensure compliance with hospital safety standards (sterilization, patient privacy, and medical device certification).
- *Scalability Studies:* Explore deployment in larger hospitals with multiple departments, elevators, and cross-building logistics.

5.6.4 Future Research Directions

- *3D LiDAR and Vision Systems:* Investigate depth perception technologies for robust navigation in highly dynamic environments.
- *Artificial Intelligence:* Incorporate AI for predictive path planning and task prioritization based on urgency.
- *Integration with IoT Systems:* Link the MSDS with hospital IoT devices (smart doors, lifts, inventory systems) for seamless operation.
- *Cybersecurity:* Strengthen data security for the web platform, ensuring encrypted communication and protection against unauthorized access.

5.7 Summary of Chapter Five

This chapter provided a detailed summary of the project, highlighting its contributions, limitations, conclusions, and recommendations. The project has shown that combining robotics with a cloud-based hospital dashboard is both feasible and promising for automating medical logistics. While challenges remain in achieving full autonomy, RFID integration, and real-world hospital testing, the groundwork laid by this project provides a strong foundation for future development and deployment. With the recommended improvements, the MSDS has the potential to become a cost-effective, scalable, and reliable hospital logistics solution capable of transforming healthcare delivery systems.

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Appendix A

APPENDIX

Due to file size constraints, detailed implementation artifacts and extended experimental logs are hosted externally.

A.1 Project Source Code and Configurations

The complete source code, including ROS2 packages, controller configurations, navigation parameters, and hardware interface implementation, is available at:

https://github.com/Eyiza/msds_ws
https://github.com/Eyiza/MSDS

A.2 Project Demonstration and Testing Video

A full demonstration of the robot's operation across evaluation scenarios, including mapping, autonomous delivery tasks, safety fault injection tests, and payload experiments, is available at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JAO9ann2IoKOm0yXlILwokYlmienMdsV/view?usp=sharing