



## Germ-zapping robot named 'Gronk' helped kill MRSA at Mass. high school

WESTFORD -- A \$100,000 germ-zapping robot called "Gronk" helped kill a [staph infection lurking in Westford Academy](#) last week.

Texas-based manufacturer Xenex contacted the school after hearing four students had contracted MRSA, or methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, and school facilities were being doused in disinfectants.

Their offer was too good to refuse.

"We have a sales representative in Boston with one of our robots," said Xenex Director of Media Relations Melinda Hart. "We offered to bring it to Westford and disinfect the school free of charge."

She added, "The machine in Boston is named 'Gronk.' Our machine in San Antonio is named 'Duncan.'"

The Xenex robot "looks like R2-D2" and stands 5-foot-2 when in operation. It works by directing xenon ultraviolet light many times stronger than sunlight at surfaces.

Once it has shined on a particular spot for a period five minutes -- and the machine can bathe 14 feet at a segment in its ultraviolet light -- any bugs that may have taken up residence there are long dead.

The Westford trip took fewer than three hours, Hart said.

The company's motives were not entirely altruistic. Hart said its provided similar services in half a dozen states in order to "promote awareness" and ramp up sales of the machine.

Roughly 350 of the Xenex robots have been sold to hospitals and other medical facilities around the country. The technology has been available since 2010.

"Hospitals are really busy places," Hart said. "When someone [with a staph infection] leaves a hospital room, less than half the surfaces inside are thoroughly cleaned if standard cleaning practices are followed. These pathogens can live for months on surfaces."

She added, "Our machine adds just 10 minutes to room turnover time and we're finding it has paid for itself within four months, or in the time it takes to prevent two or three infections."

Source: [http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2016/10/germ-zapping\\_robot\\_named\\_gronk.html](http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2016/10/germ-zapping_robot_named_gronk.html)

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