SINGAPORE

Robotic walker from NUS to help stroke patients move better

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The team of researchers from National University Hospital are collaborating with homegrown engineering firm Hope Technik to fine-tune and commercialise the robotic walker by 2017.

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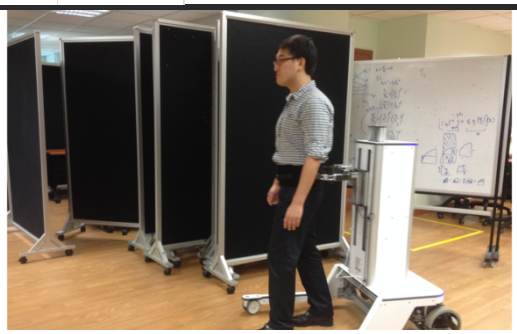

The robotic walker, developed by National University of Singapore, in action. (Photo: Haikal Latiff)

CAPTION

SINGAPORE: Researchers from the National University of Singapore (NUS) have developed a robotic walker to help stroke patients move better and more naturally.

Equipped with sensors to measure the patient's movements, the walker will be able to analyse and provide the right support to help them walk naturally.

Said NUS Department of Biomedical Engineering's Assistant Professor Yu Haoyang: “This robotic walker allows patients to practice their gait movements continuously to optimise their therapy. When patients repeat the movements in a natural setting, the routine can be imprinted into their brains, which gradually learn to correct from the damage resulting from their medical conditions.”

Besides improving the quality of rehabilitation sessions, the robotic walker will also relieve physiotherapists from the physical strain of assisting patients with the exercises.

Presently, therapy sessions involve manpower and labour, with one or two physiotherapists needed to support the patient's body weight and trunk. An additional staff may also be called in for patients who are unable to walk.
With the device, more physiotherapists can be freed up to focus on providing better assessment and training guidance for patients.

The team of researchers is planning to conduct clinical studies on patients at the National University Hospital next year. They are also collaborating with homegrown engineering firm Hope Technik to fine-tune and commercialise the product by 2017.

"Our vision is for the robotic walker to be installed at outpatient clinics and rehabilitation centres to benefit patients who need therapy sessions. There is also a possibility that patients can perform exercises in the comfort of their own homes," said Dr Yu.

- CNA/kk

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