

This robot knows exactly what kind of personalised massage you need



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A robot massage therapist is now taking clients in Singapore.

Her name is Emma, and she provides a rather unconventional – though totally above board – oriental massage service.

Unlike most other practitioners she has only one arm, and it is made of metal.

Her two “palms” consist of soft silicon that can be warmed for comfort, and her conversation is non-existent.

Yet despite her limitations, Emma has an uncanny ability to sense where the knots are and the precise amount of pressure needed to iron them out.

The robot has just started work at the NovaHealth traditional Chinese medicine clinic, where 40 minutes of her time, combined with human therapy and acupuncture, costs £38.

Emma, short for Expert Manipulative Massage Automation, was developed by AiTreat, a company spun out of Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

Guided by a cloud-based artificial intelligence (AI) system that analyses data from each patient, she is designed to provide a highly personalised massage experience.



(Nanyang Technological University)

Her two massage tips are mounted on the end of an articulated limb that can move in six different directions and she is equipped with advanced sensors for measuring muscle and tendon stiffness.

According to her designers, a session with Emma is almost indistinguishable from one provided by a professional human masseuse.

Inderjit Singh, chairman of Nanyang Technological University's innovation and enterprise arm, NTUitive, said: "There is great potential for Emma to be of service to society, especially as the population ages.

"The massage techniques of experienced and renowned TCM (traditional Chinese medicine) physicians can be reproduced in Emma, giving the public easier access to quality treatment."



(Nanyang Technological University)

The robot is mounted between two beds in a customised room at the clinic, which means she can massage one patient while a human therapist tends to another before the two switch over.

AiTreat and NovaHealth founder Albert Zhang said Emma delivers clinically precise massages according to prescriptions provided by expert human practitioners.

"By using Emma to do the labour-intensive massages, we can now offer a longer therapy session for patients while reducing the cost of treatment," he said.

“The human therapist is then free to focus on other areas such as the neck and limb joints which Emma can’t massage at the moment.”