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Your next massage could be given by Emma the robot masseuse

Domezio Lambertini | 11 Ottobre 2017, 05:12

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AiTreat's Emma: a robotic masseuse launched in Singapore's TCM

AiTreat, a start-up incubated by Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, has developed a robot masseuse, called Emma, which stands for Expert

Manipulative MassageAutomation.

NovaHealth Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) clinic now changed its work plan as it will now employ only one masseuse in the clinic instead of three. It uses advanced sensors to measure tendon and muscle stiffness, together with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cloud-based computing to calculate the optimal massage and to track a patient's recovery over a course of treatments.

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

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.

This arrangement ensures Emma is always working on a patient, maximising the productivity of the clinic.

"Emma is created to deliver a clinically precise massage according to the prescription of a qualified TCM physician or physiotherapist, without the fatigue faced by a human therapist", said Mr. Zhang, founder of AiTreat and NovaHealth, Mr Albert Zhang, who led the development of Emma. "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", he added. Zhang informed - the treatment covers up acupuncture, a 40 minutes massage and consultation which costs \$68 at NovaHealth. The robot is now rented to the clinic at a cost of S\$3,000 per month, which falls at the low end of a massage therapist's usual S\$3,000-S\$5,000 a month salary.

A health clinic in Singapore has begun introducing patients to a high-tech robot that specialises in doling out massages.

(From right to left) Inderjit Singh, Chairman of NTUitive, NTU's innovation and enterprise arm, gets a demo of Emma from Albert Zhang, founder of AiTreat, and NTU PhD student Liu Kai. The massage techniques of experienced and renowned TCM physicians can be reproduced in Emma, giving the public easier access to quality treatment. "I look forward to future studies which could improve the efficacy of such massages, using herbal ointments containing modern ingredients that improve wear and tear, such as glucosamine".

Chief Executive Officer of NTU Innovation and NTUitive Dr. Lim Jui said that tapping on disruptive technologies such as robotics and AI to improve everyday life is what Singapore needs to keep its innovative edge.