

NUS Medicine students to use 3D cadavers in three years' time

By **AMELIA TENG**

STUDENTS at the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine could be dissecting 3D holographic cadavers in three years' time.

The medical school is aiming to be the first in the world to use virtual reality simulation on a full scale, according to Associate Professor Suresh Pillai, director of NUS' Centre for Healthcare Simulation.

The centre is working on an interactive cadaver project with

the Keio-NUS Connective Ubiquitous Technology for Embodiments Centre and a pilot project involving a small group of students will be carried out at the end of 2017.

The project is one of several funded by Indonesian businessman and philanthropist, Datuk Seri Dr Tahir, who donated \$30 million to NUS in 2012 for biomedical research, projects to improve medical education, student bursaries and scholarships.

A facility named after him – the Tahir Foundation Building, on

the Kent Ridge campus – was opened yesterday. It houses research labs and rooms for NUS Medicine students.

Prof Pillai said the new 3D cadaver system will complement traditional anatomy teaching methods that use real-life cadavers, multimedia software and pre-dissected cadavers. The 3D cadavers will also in time be used for nursing students.

NUS Medicine students stopped dissecting cadavers in 2003 due to a short supply, and switched to pre-dissected ones.

Prof Pillai said the new model will allow students to “virtually dissect a certain section of the body... from the skin, subcutaneous tissue, muscles, bones to the brain, and trace all the nerves that come out from the brain, and they can go back and forth”.

First-year NUS Medicine student Yeo Jia Zheng, 20, said: “Virtual cadavers will help students to have better spatial awareness and orientation of the human body as real cadavers are a bit difficult to move around.”

NUS president Tan Chorh

Chuan said that “basic procedural skills and difficult surgical procedures can be practised and rehearsed to improve performance in real-life situations”.

He was speaking at yesterday's opening of the 17-storey Tahir Foundation Building, which is shared with the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, as well as pharmacy and chemistry students.

Education Minister Heng Swee Keat, who attended the event, said “by co-locating facilities, we can better provide an integrated

training ground and opportunities for interaction” among medical practitioners, researchers, educators and students.

Dr Tahir's donation is also funding a project to develop a platform for students to learn through virtual scenarios such as a hospital emergency room and an operating theatre.

The money is also going towards improving the medical curriculum and training medical students to work with nurses and allied professionals.

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