

## Human 'spare parts', made in S'pore

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**NUS engineers swop ideas in a research corridor where human tissue is made using weaving and scaffolding techniques.**

ENGINEERING professors at the National University of Singapore have started a research 'corridor' aimed at creating state-of-the-art human 'spare parts' that can be used to treat various injuries.

With engineering principles normally employed in the textile and construction industries, they have used weaving and scaffolding techniques to generate samples of human tissue, bone, ligaments, nerves and even extra-strong fillings for decaying teeth.

Many of these world firsts have already seen success in the laboratory, and will be put through clinical trials soon.

Professor Ng Wun Jern, dean of the university's Faculty of Engineering, said that the creation of its Bio-engineering Corridor will change the public's perception of engineers.

'Engineers will no longer just wear hardhats and be seen at construction sites or factories only. Some of them will also wear white lab coats and conduct research to treat illnesses and save lives.'

Armed with this research corridor, NUS will be the first university in the region to offer a degree in bio-engineering this year.

Its first batch of about 30 bio-engineers is expected to graduate in 2006.

Prof Ng said the progress achieved by the corridor has made it possible to run these courses. 'While the research in this area started a few years ago, we now have something very tangible to teach the students.'

In view of Singapore's life-sciences push, he noted that such graduates would probably be 'very marketable'.

As part of a \$4-million pilot project which began last year, the faculty grouped all its experts from the various engineering departments and put them on the same floor.

The corridor now has about 10 laboratories, each about the size of a three-room Housing Board flat.