

EMAT: Coming Soon to the World Wide Web

Bill Brereton. "There will be electronic, mechanical, and automotive devices to show therapists the kind of practical supports we can develop."

The site will include photos of various switches that use touch or breath to control items ranging from remote door locks to television sets. Web site visitors will also be able to see larger devices, including motor vehicles, created by EMAT to help promote independent living for its growing clientele.

Among the projects highlighted are devices to assist with bath transfer, load lifting, personal lifting devices, wheelchair modifications, adaptive baby strollers, and automotive driver controls that are not commercially available.

"Therapists, clients, and others will be able to peruse the site and get some ideas about how EMAT can help," says Brereton, noting on-line shopping would be impractical since most products require customizing.

"Individuals may come to us with equipment that requires modification to meet their needs. Seeing what we've done already, may give them some ideas about what we can do for them."

Today, Manitoba... tomorrow, the World Wide Web.

EMAT will soon be more accessible than ever when it launches its official web site at www.hsc.mb.ca/re. Currently under construction, the site is expected to be up and running in early June, helping to boost EMAT's profile on the Internet.

"Our new web site will provide general information about what we do, as well as an on-line catalogue featuring some of the devices we've developed to help clients live their lives more fully," says EMAT's



Adapting Hand Tools

People with amputated hands are benefiting from EMAT's unique talents for adapting popular hand tools for use by prosthetics wearers.

"Any tool normally handheld can be adapted with a wrist unit attachable to a prosthesis," says Paul Tustin, supervisor of EMAT's mechanical division. "Whatever type of tool the client wants to use, we will try to design one to meet their needs."

From vise grips to hammers, tools are often adapted by EMAT staff for clients, a service especially valued by the farming community. Tustin says staff have occasionally visited farms to assess the adaptation needs of clients who make their living in agriculture. EMAT has created innovative, adaptive products like an overhead crane to lift an individual into a tractor, and modified controls for ease of use.

Solutions are developed based on client goals, current level of ability, and the creative innovation long associated with the EMAT team.

Promoting Seniors' Independence

As the baby boom generation continues to move into its collective retirement years, the need for products that compensate for aging-related changes is expected to increase.

Developing devices and equipment that foster independent living is at the heart of EMAT's work and the department continues to create products that help seniors live as independently as possible, for as long as possible.

"We can do almost anything anyone asks us to do if it's not commercially available," says Paul Tustin, supervisor of EMAT's mechanical division. "We can create devices for use by anyone with a disability who needs help to perform such diverse tasks as driving, gardening, or managing a household."

Tustin says EMAT has produced a number of products to assist clients who have lost limbs or live with arthritis. Customized garden equipment enables arthritic clients to indulge a love of gardening, while adapted tractors enable amputees to continue working on the farm.

The department can also make daily living easier for seniors who might need the kinds of supports that were once available only in institutional settings. With the addition of grab bars, raised toilet seats, adapted telephones and appliances, and even remote door locks, seniors can live as independently as they choose. The process is simple and the results are often amazing.

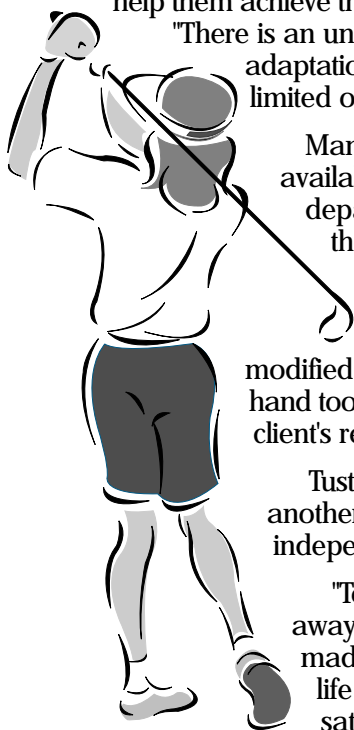
"We consider the person's current abilities and adapt the equipment or create a device that will help them achieve their goals," says Tustin.

"There is an unbelievable range of adaptations that EMAT can do, limited only by imagination."

Many EMAT services are available through the department at no cost to the client, or on a cost-recovery basis. The cost of the basic equipment to be modified – such as a vehicle, hand tool, or appliance – is the client's responsibility.

Tustin says enhancing another person's feeling of independence is priceless.

"To see someone go away with something we made that will make their life easier is very satisfying."



Putting Clients in the Driver's Seat

The newest addition to the HSC Occupational Therapy department's equipment list is a new assessment vehicle, well-equipped to help clients get comfortably and efficiently back into the driver's seat.

The Chevy Sonoma cab was donated by Manitoba Public Insurance and modified by EMAT to offer additional features, such as hand controls, a reaction timer, and more. Paul Tustin, supervisor of EMAT's mechanical division, says the new vehicle sits atop a hydraulically elevated platform, adaptable to match the varying heights of different vehicles, from cars to trucks.

Therapists work with clients and the assessment vehicle to determine what modifications their vehicles might need to get the client on the road again. The vehicle also provides a practical way for clients to "practice" transferring from wheelchair to vehicle, knowing a therapist will be there to help if problems arise.

"The new vehicle enables staff to conduct a better assessment of client needs," says Tustin. "It is newer and more relevant to the types of vehicles that might be brought in for adaptation. It will be well used."