

# Relief for your lower back pain

TWO devices developed by Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students to help treat lower back pain and difficulty in swallowing were demonstrated at Singapore General Hospital (SGH) yesterday.

The devices, developed as a result of an MOU signed in 2005 between NP and SGH, are for home use. No alternatives are available.

Each device was developed at a cost of \$500 by final-year students from NP's School of Engineering, in collaboration with therapists at SGH.

The device to relieve lower back pain symptoms allows a patient to sit upright throughout the process.

Conventional traction, on the other hand, requires a patient to lie on a bed and is only available in hospitals.

The new device is also portable and can be used on almost any chair.

About 160 new back pain patients are seen weekly at SGH's Physiotherapy De-

partment – about 70 per cent of them office workers who suffer as a result of prolonged sitting.

The device to treat difficulty in swallowing, or dysphagia, is the first in its field. It allows patients to exercise throat muscles at home to help them swallow.

SGH sees more than 300 new in-patient cases for swallowing disorders every month. Up to now, patients unable to provide the required resistance for exercise have needed a third party to help them.

Although still in the early stages, the two new devices have plenty of potential, according to SGH's senior principal physiotherapist Celia Tan, who is impressed that students came up with them within a year.

The devices have been earmarked for further development by NP. Members of the public can see them at the school's open house from Jan 8-10, between 11am and 6pm.