Virtual Dog Helps Teach Colorado Vet Students

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FORT COLLINS, Colo. (CBS) — Students at the Colorado State University veterinary school are helping to create a virtual dog as a way to teach people how to properly give animals acupuncture.

The treatment is becoming more popular with veterinarians to treat a variety of conditions, reports CBS station KCNC-TV in Denver.

The virtual dog prevents a student from poking the pooch in the wrong place with an acupuncture needle.

Engineering students at CSU are working with veterinarian professors to create the teaching tool.

"When you touch this you can actually feel the bones underneath," said Ben Cordova, an engineering student.

The team has created a head with all the right textures and programmed a computer so students can push on the dog with a special pointer. The pointer sends three-dimensional information to the computer as students use it to practice which place to put needles on the dog's head.

Narda Robinson, a CSU veterinarian, said there are 65 acupuncture points just on a dog's head that students could learn to stimulate without using a live animal.

"So the student can do it over and over and learn what the feel is, what the points are," Robinson said.

"As a teacher she can go and put the points on the dog that are correct and then a student can come in after her and practice on those points and get tested on how well they replicated her touches," Cordova said.

The student engineers hope to model an entire's dog's body eventually.

The CSU students have named the virtual dog the "sim-pooch."

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