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TECHNOLOGY



'Toilets with brains' for disabled

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VIENNA, Austria (AP) -- They size you up, offer you a hand, raise and lower the seat and flush when you're finished.

Researchers at Vienna's Technical University said Thursday they have begun production on what they've dubbed a "toilet with brains" -- a high-tech commode designed to help multiple sclerosis patients and other disabled or elderly people.

Scientists are refining two versions: one that uses "smart cards" that a person inserts in a slot upon entering the toilet, which then adjusts hand rails, and another that does the same using voice-recognition technology.

Users who enter the cabin are sized up by technology that then activates swinging hand rails into the proper location or adjusts the seat height to accommodate people in wheelchairs. The toilets detect when the person is finished and flush automatically.

An international team of 10 experts with the university's Research Group for Rehabilitation Technology developed the intelligent toilets, and the university said a patent for the design is pending.

The toilets were tested on 35 patients, officials said, adding that full-scale production could begin before the end of the year.

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