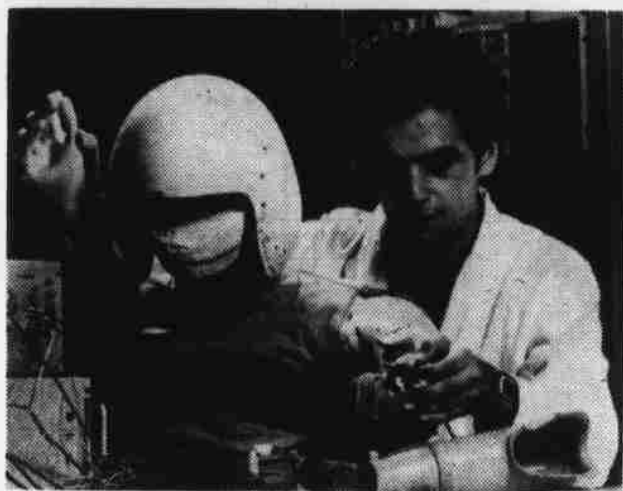


Miracle In Biomechanics



Researcher adjusts a mechanical elbow at the Technion's Silver Institute of Bio-Medical Engineering.

In order to construct artificial limbs that mimic nature's perfect design, bio-medical engineers at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology are studying how our limbs respond to stress, pressure, and other mechanical forces.

One of the problems facing these researchers is that the mechanics of movement are so com-

plex that a tangle of variables must be taken into account before artificial limbs can be engineered to be both functional and comfortable.

Dr. Rahamin Seliktar, Associate Professor at the Technion's Julius Silver Institute of Bio-Medical Engineering, has condensed the many ways engineers measure movement into six major categories. These categories give a much simpler and clearer description of how an artificial limb must function in a way easily understood by doctors and technicians. "In addition," says Dr. Seliktar, "it also lets us modify prosthetic devices along objective criteria, rather than relying solely on the subjective view of the patient."

Understanding of how limbs function, coupled with advances in medical electronics, are making artificial limbs more 'lifelike' than ever before. However, current designs of artificial arms are awkward because they involve a cable grip controlled by the muscles of the user's shoulder. The amputee must rely solely on his sight to know how far the artificial limb is extended or how much force is being exerted to grasp an object. The complicated maneuver of reaching for a glass and grasping it is a difficult skill to master, says Seliktar, and often results in such acute embarrassment that the user often prefers not to use the mechanical appendage.

Researchers at the Technion are experimenting with an artificial appendage that is activated by electrical feedback generated by the patient's own nervous system. Tiny sensors implanted in the amputee's joint send back electronic signals to the user, telling him how far his artificial arm is outstretched. Powered by an ex-

ternal power pack worn as a vest, the device enables the handicapped to better control the strength and dexterity of his mechanical arm and hand.

Ninety-seven percent of the 37,000 members of the Israeli Association of Disabled War Veterans are self-supporting members of Israeli society. By improving prosthetic devices, the Technion's Silver Institute of Bio-Medical Engineering help the handicapped throughout the world lead fuller lives.

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