Medical students use Xbox controllers, 3D glasses in classroom

Modern technology helps UT-Health San Antonio students in science lab

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SAN ANTONIO - At first glance, a science lab at UT-Health San Antonio could be mistaken for a gaming room.

"This is our new digital anatomy lab space. We use it to enhance our anatomy teaching," said Dr Omid Rahimi, UT-Health San Antonio anatomy and embryology professor.

Students sit at desks in front of monitors using Xbox controllers and 3D glasses.

"It works just like a controller on a regular Xbox, pretty much all the buttons, some buttons more than others," said Jefferson Bedell, a third-year medical student.

As fun as it looks, the Body VIS system is a very serious way for students and doctors to gather more knowledge about the human body.

"We can use the Xbox controller to digitally dissect the tissue. We can filter through various tissues, bones, muscles and vasculature," Rahimi said.

Bedell was looking at a 3D image of the brain when he noticed a tumor.

"We can also look at this and say, 'OK, this is a tumor,'" Bedell said.

The lab is the first of its kind in the country.

"We have enough stations where they can collaboratively highlight the anatomy and pathology that they see in these sample clinic cases," Rahimi said.

This new way of studying anatomy provides an additional asset for health professors.

"We want to know how structures are related to each other in the body, so our surgeons, clinicians can repair through medicine," Rahimi said.

The class allows for practical application on a computer before working on the real, live human body.

"We can use digital dissection, we can cut away tissue, we can highlight vasculature, then we can isolate the vessels and rotate them in 3D," Rahimi said.

Bedell said Body VIS is a great resource.

"Just another tool in your tool belt," he said.