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Yen-Ching Pao, professor of engineering mechanics

## UNL engineer's work aimed at human pump

By Martha Bohling

Engineers normally concentrate on the design of buildings and machines, but an engineering professor at UNL is concentrating on the design of another structure—the human heart.

Yen-Ching Pao, professor of engineering mechanics, is aiding the Mayo Foundation in Rochester, Minn., with research concerning heart disease.

Pao spent the last two summers as a visiting scientist at the foundation and has been serving as a consultant for the past year.

"I've shown them how to take engineering knowledge and apply it to the medical field," he said.

Pao said the same technique can be used to study the human heart as is used to study the structure of an airplane.

The technique, called the finite element technique, involves dividing the structure into many separate parts and studying each part individually, as well as studying the relationship between parts.

"The heart is nothing but another structure," he said. "The only difference is the material properties it has."

It is the material properties which his research is trying to discover, he said.

The research involves the left ventricle of the heart, which is the chamber that pumps blood into the arteries, Pao said.

"What we are trying to determine is the strength, the elasticity, of the muscles in the left ventricle wall," he said.

According to Pao, the amount of elasticity indicates the health of the heart, because certain heart diseases or aging can cause the muscles to stiffen.

The research is designed to set up a numbered index of elasticity which ultimately can be used in diagnosing heart problems, he said.

The funding for Pao's work is \$24,200 for 1975. It will total \$139,140 through 1979.

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