

RESEARCHERS WORKING TO PERFECT ROBOTIC LEGS



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By [Christi Myers](#)

HOUSTON -- Researchers here in Houston are testing some robotic legs that may enable a paralyzed person to walk. And they are working on a way they can be guided by your thoughts. A Houston surgeon who is paralyzed is helping test them out.

Dr. Gene Alford is known for the faces he has reconstructed. Then he suffered a spinal chord injury on his farm and was paralyzed. After rehab, he's operating again using a standing wheelchair. But he never gave up.

"Will I will someday? I hope so," he had told us.

That day is here.

Dr. Alford walks using what's called the Rex Bionic robotic legs.

"It feels very natural," he said.

He controls it with a joystick. But Houston researchers say Dr. Alford will one day be able to walk, just using his thoughts. To do that, he wears a skull cap with an EEG that can read his brain waves. And University of Houston engineers and Methodist neurosurgeons are getting closer to perfecting this technology of hope.

"It's the beginning of what I think is a new era of robotics and what robotics can do for people who are injured or have parts of their body that don't work anymore," Dr. Alford said.

He's tested several other robotic walking devices but says the Rex, so far, is the best.

"Theoretically, I could put on Rex walk in the operating room and do my surgery," Dr. Alford said.

And to once again, have the freedom of simple movements.

"To be able to stand up and look somebody in the face, to be able to move unencumbered, not on wheels, it's a fabulous feeling," Dr. Alford said.

The University of Houston professor who's designing the thought-guided interface for the legs hopes to have it ready for Dr. Alford to test this fall.

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