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Experts plan to set up 'space hospital'

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As China's Tiangong space station recently completed its in-orbit assembly, the country's space medicine experts have started planning to set up a "space hospital" to serve astronauts, according to a leading scientist.

"We are carrying out extensive research, experiments and tests on the ground to advance the preliminary work on a space hospital that can be deployed inside a manned spacecraft like our space station. The value of this project is that it will enable our space explorers to travel deeper and stay healthy during their journeys," Du Jichen, a member of the Paris-based International Academy of Astronautics and president of the Aerospace Center Hospital in Beijing, said on Monday in Zhuhai, Guangdong province.

"The research, design and construction of such a space-based clinic will also help to lead and foster the development of our country's medical technology and hardware, thus boosting the entire medical and healthcare sectors," Du said.

Chinese space medicine experts have been discussing a sustainable



Du Jichen

'medical complex' inside the space station or other spacecraft that can meet the basic needs of diagnosis and treatment," the scientist said.

Du said that upon the deployment of the medical facility, astronauts will be able to use self-examination instruments to make a diagnosis if they do not feel well, and then can take timely medical measures.

Currently, medical support for astronauts mostly relies on doctors on the ground.

The biggest challenge in this program is that engineers must figure out how to pack medical devices into a very limited space, Du said, adding that they need to upgrade current technologies and use interdisciplinary collaboration to achieve this goal.

Du was speaking to China Daily after the Aerospace Medicine and

approach to keep astronauts fit and treat possible health conditions in lengthy spaceflights, he said. "A mainstream idea is that we can place a small

Human Health Conference in Zhuhai, which was organized by the Aerospace Medicine Professional Committee under the China Medicine Education Association.

Participants in the conference shared their views and visions about medical support during manned spaceflights and the transfer of technology to public healthcare.

Starting from the Shenzhou XIII mission launched in October 2021, each Chinese spaceflight crew would stay on board the country's Tiangong space station for six months.

Medical scientists and engineers have conducted a great deal of research to prepare Chinese astronauts for the missions, Du said.

They have been focused on the impact on astronauts' health during long-term space missions, as well as investigating how the special environment inside the space station, especially its weightlessness, will affect astronauts' health, particularly their cerebral functions.

Studies have shown that mid- or long-term stays in space mainly affect the musculoskeletal and nervous systems. Extended missions also impact the immune, circulatory, respiratory and urinary systems, he said.