Grand launch for Monash Centre in Italy

By MELANIE GARDNER and DAVID BRUCE

Monash University launched its new centre in Prato, located in the heart of Italy's Tuscany region, with a grand opening ceremony on 17 September. The Monash Centre in Prato will be a gateway into Europe for staff and students from Monash University. It will combine with the Monash Centre at King's College in London to forge links between the academic and professional communities of Australia, Italy and wider Europe.

More than 120 people attended the function held in the Grand Salone and were entertained by a quartet from the Monash University Music Ensemble. In adjoining rooms were displays of the first European exhibition of Dinosaurs of Darkness from the Monash Science Centre and contemporary art from the Monash University Museum of Art collection.

Monash vice-chancellor Professor David Robinson thanked the major benefactors, the Melbourne-based family of Mr Rino Grollo and Mrs Diana Grollo, for their continued support of the university's drive to develop a global network of campuses and centres that enable Australian students, researchers and professional and industry groups to become actively engaged in international communities.

Speaking on behalf of the Grollo family, who were unable to attend the ceremony, Mr Tom Hazell said the family was committed to the development of tertiary education in Australia and, through partnerships like those with Monash, to fostering greater links with Italy.

"This is something we are committed to both morally and financially. We are sure that only good can come from this venture in Prato," he said.

Professor Robinson said the centre provided Monash with a significant presence in Europe.

"Our centres in Prato and London will enable us to engage with other universities, governments, cultural organisations and industry, and provide our students and staff with opportunities to study and share research developments with their peers across Europe," he said.

"Monash University aims to be actively engaged with the diverse regions, communities and industries that it serves across its campuses in Australia, Malaysia and South Africa and its centres in Italy and the United Kingdom."

The ceremony was attended by Italian and Australian dignitaries, including patron of the centre Sir James Gobbo and the Australian ambassador to Italy, Mr Murray Cobbold.

The director of the centre, Professor Bill Kent, said the centre was the Italian expression of Monash's vision to be a leader in the worldwide advance and application of knowledge.

"Monash Prato will bring Australia and Italy closer together by showcasing achievements and promoting understanding," he said. "It will provide a venue for learning, teaching and research in the service of both the Australian and Italian communities."

The local Prato population has been invited to join the opening activities at the centre. These include the

Opening night: From left, Monash University chancellor Mr Jerry Tils, local official Mr Giuseppe Vanucci, patron of the centre Sir James Gobbo AC, Grollo family spokesman Mr Tom Hazell AO, deputy chancellor Dr Jane Hearn, vice-chancellor Professor David Robinson and director of the Monash Centre in Prato Professor Bill Kent.

Dinosaurs of Darkness exhibition, assembled by a team of Monash paleontologists. A sample of the exhibition that has toured the world shows the beasts that roamed the polar regions between 70 and 120 million years ago. Also on show is Our Place, an exhibition of contemporary art from southern Australia, from the Monash University Museum of Art collection. Featured are paintings, sculptures and installations by 13 leading contemporary Australian artists that together reveal the diverse histories of present-day Australia.

The Monash Centre in Prato is located at Palazzo Vaj, Via Pugliesi, 26, 59100 Prato, Italy. Visit the website www.monash.edu.au/prato

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The author of a new book says Australians who lack mathematical skills may be passed over for promotion.
Turning the office green

By JUNEYU

Victorian business and industry will soon benefit from the green skills of Monash University environment change management students under an innovative new training program.

The program, now in its second year, is a joint venture of the Monash Environment Institute and MSA Consulting, the University's Association's environmental training and consultancy arm.

Program coordinator Mr Elza Tagar says this year's program will see nine students combine training sessions with a work placement to gain hands-on experience.

"The program offers unique exposure to the most current developments in environmental product and project work," he said. "The students emerge with a very good understanding of the issues involved in greening organisations."

"The culmination of training, critical reflection on the issues and getting their work exposed to the wider community once in areas such as waste auditing and workplace communication produces very good results."

According to Mr Tagar, the 2000 pilot program saw eight out of the 10 participating students gain employment as a result of this development in the program.

"The employability of the students and the success of the workplace projects they were involved with instilled in the program's success," he said.

Hosts have included KPMG Consulting, VIST Business Group, Origin Energy, Chisholm Institute of TAFE, the Australian Red Cross Blood Service, Lonely Planet Publishing and several smaller environmental consultants.

Student Mr Zulfikar Rahar undertook a six-week placement at Origin Energy as part of the 2000 program and is now working for the company in a contract role.

"I was responsible for implementing a green office program in the Melbourne office and facilitated and led a team of volunteers," he said.

"I have gained a good understanding of all aspects of environmental practice such as

resourcing paper, improving energy efficiency and buying environmentally friendly products."

Mr Tagar was working on introducing the green office program into two other Origin Energy locations.

Mr Rahar said the experience would be invaluable for his future career and improve environmental sustainability practices in business.

Origin Energy marketing associate Mr Michael Dador said Zulf's input in boosting the company's green office practice had been of great benefit to the company.

"Employing a person with the credentials to assist with the boosting of the company's green office practices sends a powerful message that the company is committed to improving its environmental practice," he said.

Other employers reported significant cost savings through waste reduction and recycling programs.

Organisations wishing to offer a work placement or anyone wanting further information about the program should contact Mr Tagar on +61 3 9055 0792.

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Asian corporate gender roles come under research scrutiny

By JUNEYU

Japanese corporate managers working in Malaysia have struggled to translate their highly ritualized intra-organisational culture, according to Monash Centre for Management Studies director Dr Wendy Smith.

Dr Smith will discuss differences in corporate culture, including the differences between Japanese managers and their Malaysian counterparts in a paper for the International Symposium on Malaysian Management, scheduled for 3 to 4 November at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Her paper is based on field research on the cultural aspects of Japanese management when transferred to Malaysia, as part of the loom in Japan's foreign investment that began in the early 1970s.

She interviewed expatriate Japanese managers and spent two years observing corporate behaviour in a Japanese company in Malaysia.

"I talked to everyone from chiefs to managers, sat in on meetings, visited their homes and went to local restaurants," Dr Smith said.

She said various communication problems arose between Japanese managers and local managers.

Dr Smith said the "corporate warrior mentality, largely responsible for much of Japan's economic success, was often at odds with the Malaysian's more relaxed lifestyle."

More Western society could learn much about handling diversity from the Japanese-Malaysian context.

"The West has already gained a lot from the Japanese management concepts of just-in-time and enterprise bargaining. Now we can learn a lot from societies such as Malaysia that are looking at diversity as a potential for growth," Dr Smith said.

She is also looking at how managing the Malaysian multi-ethnic workforce required sensitivity in handling religious holidays, dietary prohibitions and religiously based dress codes.

"When employees see that managers are prepared to give respect to their cultural needs, they become loyal workers who are reluctant to leave the company despite offers of better pay," she said.

"In this way, patronage which is a carry-over from pre-industrial society, is used to maximise employee satisfaction and productivity. Australian managers are increasingly having to manage workplace diversity, based on religious differences and social origins." Dr Smith said her conference paper would highlight these differences and examine the corporate relationships and personal lifestyles of Japanese managers in Malaysia.

Dr Smith is convenor of the Malaysian Masculinities Symposium, to be held from 2 to 4 November at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

For more information of a registration form, contact Dr Smith on +61 3 9055 9250 or visit www.monalist.edu.my/eai/cmp/program.html.

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Multimedia centre for Berwick campus

By MARY VISCOVICH

The Federal Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Dr David Kemp, last month announced the allocation of $2 million in 2004 to build a new multimedia centre at Monash University's Berwick campus.

The centre, which will be part of the School of Multimedia Systems, will comprise multimedia laboratories, design studios, staff accommodation, two tutorial rooms and a 220-capacity lecture theatre.

"The funds will come from the DETYA Capital Development Pool, with DETYA and the department would look favourably on approving a further $2 million towards the development project," Mr Kemp said.

Berwick campus director Mr Bob Burnet said Mr Kemp's announcement was a milestone for the campus and would facilitate its development in such a way as to ensure that it added real value to the region.

"It will provide the City of Casey with a university campus which it can be proud of and which will be accessible to its residents," Mr Burnet said.

He pointed out that it was important and logical that the development of the campus continued, as it was part of the federal government's commitment to education.

Mr Burnet added that the support of local federal MP Mr Bob Chilvers had been invaluable in helping Monash obtain the capital grant, as it had the continued support of the project by the City of Casey.

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Music helps protect the body from stress

BY DERICK BROWN

Relaxing music may protect the body from the adverse effects of stress such as high blood pressure, anxiety and cardiovascular disease, reveals Monash University research.

Dr Nikki Rickard and her student Ms Wendy Knight, from Monash's Department of Psychology, have completed studies showing that subjects who listened to a certain piece of relaxing music while in a high-stress situation experienced an increase in heart rate, blood pressure and the release of a hormone related to stress, she said.

"If it's music that students who listened to relaxing music did not show any of these effects. We found, by monitoring a number of measures, that the music significantly prevented the expected stress response," she said.

While Dr Rickard acknowledged that past studies had shown relaxing or sedative types of music -- involving slow tempos, gentle melodic contours and strings -- reduced people's feelings of anxiety, up to now there had been little proof of a direct physical impact.

Calmling Music soothes the savage beast. Picture: AAP

"This research shows the link between the emotional response to music, which must of us experience, and actual changes in the physiological processes of the body," she said.

Dr Rickard believes music therapy has not had widespread acceptance among health professionals mainly due to a lack of clear evidence that it actually influences the body's processes.

"This study helps legitimise the use of music in various forms of therapy to reduce anxiety and lessen the chance of developing stress-related disease," she said.

While the findings of the study were not selected by gender, musical training or predisposition to anxiety, Dr Rickard said further studies were needed to ensure subjects' familiarity with the music before it influenced the body's processes.

Music helps protect the body from stress

New bone coating may help medical implants

BY DERICK BROWN

Monash University research into calcium phosphate coatings may lead to improved techniques for fastening medical materials such as hip and knee prostheses and dental implants to existing bone.

Current cements and coatings containing calcium phosphate are designed to slowly dissolve, releasing elements that encourage bone to grow over the implant.

But according to Dr Karl Gross from the School of Physics and Materials Engineering in the Faculty of Science at Monash, occasionally the cements and coatings dissolve too quickly.

"Coatings contain calcium phosphate particles embedded in binding material. As the calcium phosphate is absorbed by the bone, the bond is remoulded in which it it held rigidly in place.

"This process is important for stimulating bone growth, but the rate at which the material dissolves is often unstable," he said.

"If the dissolution occurs too quickly, the bone loses hold of the implant, and implant integration is lost.

"The bone attaches to particles within the coating that come loose from the binding material, weakening the overall connection.

Dr Gross, who presented a paper on new developments in the analysis of calcium phosphate coatings at the 14th International Symposium on Bioceramics in Bologna, Italy, last November, is researching methods for creating a more stable coating.

"Traditionally, calcium phosphate substances don't work well in the joint and the dental industry has been reluctant to use the substance," Dr Gross said.

He believes there are many applications within the medical field for a coating that would combine with a binding of dissolving dental implants in a different setting and to compare how, if their teaching styles were comparable to such environments, they were also able to review their ideas of teaching and learning in another cultural situation.

Dr Ian Walker and Dr Julie Edwards, from the Faculty of Education, also conducted a joint one-day workshop for the Cook Islands Teachers College trainees and Monash students during the visit.

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Professor Healy leads the Monash team that developed and operates the simulator, the primary purpose of which is to teach and monitor laparoscopic, or keyhole, surgery.

Hazel is one of a few gynaecological simulators in the world and is unique in its purpose of not only objectively assessing a surgeon's laparoscopic skills but also, crucially, of measuring improvement - those skills over time.

Professor Healy says Hazel was partly inspired by aviation industry flight simulators, which test a pilot's professional competency.

"Just as a passenger boarding a jet expects the pilot's skills to be equal to the task, a patient about to undergo laparoscopic surgery has the right to expect the surgeon's skills to be of the highest standard, constantly updated and objectively assessed," he says.

"Many surgeons, especially older ones, are not adequately practised in using laparoscopy, which represents a complete medical revolution - their 20th century surgical skills may be excellent, but they don't apply to this new 21st century surgical technique."

Laparoscopic gynaecological surgery often entails making a small cut in the navel, into which gas is introduced to inflate the abdomen, followed by an endoscopic light and camera at the end of a pencil-thin fiberoptic cable. Two further small cuts are usually made to admit long, slender operating instruments, including a diathermy knife in the form of an electrode or laser. The surgeon operates by watching a television monitor.

Laparoscopy has several advantages over older surgical techniques. It can produce less internal trauma and scarring, cause less post-operative pain and requires less time for patient recovery and is less expensive - with no big scars as an added bonus.

However, unlike in other countries, the use of gynaecological laparoscopy in Australia is not increasing. Gynaecological procedures can be daunting - they take place in the pelvis.

Pharmacy website helps teething troubles

By Allison Hardman

Health professionals will have immediate access to new developments in health issues for older Australians through an innovative website launched this month by the Victorian College of Pharmacy and Monash University.

The Improving Oral Health for Older People online project, which identifies critical issues for older people, has been developed through Monash's website at www.PharmCE.vic.edu.au.

The project particularly targets consumers aged over 65 and older people who achieve better oral health, in keeping with the Victorian College of Pharmacy's website at www.PharmCE.vic.edu.au.

The site will provide ready access to information on various oral conditions. The program is being run in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (Victorian branch), Dental Health Services Victoria, Australian Nursing Homes and Extended Care Association, and the Department of Human Services (Victoria).

The oral health program was launched by the Victorian Minister for Housing and Aged Care, Ms Bronwyn Pilk, and is just one of many programs that will be hosted on the PharmCE.vic.edu.au.

"Improvements in oral health of an older person will result in an improvement to their general health," Commonwealth Health conditions that affect older people include dental decay, gum disease, mouth ulcers and dry mouth (xerostomia). The website will provide ready access to information and advice on various oral conditions. The program is being run in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (Victorian branch), Dental Health Services Victoria, Australian Nursing Homes and Extended Care Association, and the Department of Human Services (Victoria).

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The site also hosts the Recent Developments in Drug Therapy program, and forthcoming programs include Methadone - A Harm Minimisation Approach in November and The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme in December.

Worming her way to success

By Stephen NO

Not many women would be thrilled to have a worm named after her, but Monash University Malaysia's Ms Aislingh Kua is an exception.

A fourth-year Faculty of Science biomedical science honours student, Ms Kua is making a name for herself in the scientific world of marine and freshwater biology, after discovering a new species of freshwater worm.

Ms Kua found the new species of the Phylum Nemertea (ribbon worm) by chance while she was looking for new species of freshwater invertebrates in the rivers of Endau-Rompin Park in the State of Johor.

"We were attending a seminar by Professor Roy Gibson, a world-class expert on Nemertea, at the research centre in Endau-Rompin Park. Later, when I went out sampling dragonfly larvae, I came across this tiny worm. I handed it over to Professor Gibson and he was thrilled," she said.

Ms Kua said her curious discovery is only one of many that she has made in the past long and has a proboscis which it shoots out to catch prey.

Dr Yule, an expert in freshwater ecology and lecturer in the Bachelor of Science (Environmental Management) at Monash University Malaysia, said Ms Kua's work has been very successful overall.

"We managed to discover more than 20 new species of freshwater invertebrates," she said. "We also found new evidence of animals never before recorded here."

Dr Yule, who has worked as an environmental consultant in Papua New Guinea, Australia and Malaysia for more than 20 years, says the expedition was part of research for a 60-page guide, The Freshwater Invertebrates of Malaysia and Singapore, which he is still compiling with the University of Malaysia's Professor Yong Hoi Sen.

Ms Kua's freshwater fauna of Malaysia and Singapore is becoming increasingly well known. However, there are no guides available that can enable people to identify freshwater animals they find in lakes and rivers in the region," she said.

"The book will carry contributions from specialists from all over the world and will be published by the Academy of Sciences Malaysia."

Schools

Camp Monash

Camp Monash is a residential program for Year 11 students aimed at introducing potential students to secondary life. The program, which includes academic, social and sporting activities, will be run this year from 26 November to 4 December, with an information evening to be held on Wednesday, 28 November.

For more information, contact the Prospective Students Office on +61 3 9905 5859.

Direct entry course

A new course, Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Science, will be introduced in 2002 at Monash's Clayton campus.

This four-year double degree can be studied full time or off-campus and designed especially for students wishing to study social work or health sciences who do not have a second-year University entrance qualification, or to register, contact Philippa Brown in the Applications received after this date will be considered only if places are still available.

Not many women would be thrilled to have a worm named after her, but Monash University Malaysia's Ms Aislingh Kua is an exception.

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The带队老师在课堂教学中提到，四川大学的教授为了提高学生的语言成绩，采取了一系列的措施，包括设立专门的语言实验室，提供个性化的辅导，并要求学生每天花费一小时的时间进行自主学习。这些措施被证明是非常有效的，因为学生的英语成绩有了显著的提高。
Free trade: the way forward

The terrorist attacks on the US diverted attention from Prime Minister John Howard's original purpose in visiting the US last month - free trade agreements. Chairman of Monash University's Australia Pacific Economic Cooperation Study Centre Alan Oxley explains the background.

A free trade agreement is not just about trade, but about closer economic relationships. A FTA would stimulate greater US investment in Australia. By drawing attention to Australia in US business circles, it would foster adoption by Australian business of US benchmarks for business, particularly productivity, excellence and utilisation of IT. Australia will acquire the global standards needed to excel in the information age. Australia also needs to adopt standards of global excellence in business to compete in world markets, including in Asia.

The defence relationship has been the core of the relationship between the US and Australia since World War II. The importance of this to Australia will only increase as the US economy becomes the world's economic standard setter. A FTA would bring valuable, albeit modest, gains in trade. Trade barriers in both countries are low. This is one reason the economic argument for multilateral trade liberalisation delivers better benefits than bilateral liberalisation does not apply in the case of a free trade agreement between Australia and the US. With low barriers there is little risk of trade diversion.

The US and Australia are the largest source of foreign investment in Australia and the largest destination for Australians investing outside Australia. The opening of the market is critical to the idea of comprehensive analysis and review of the implications for Australia of an FTA. Papers from the conference and the report, which was released in late August, are available on the centre's website at www.apec.org.au.

The conference also addressed the critical need for closer economic engagement between Australia and the US. The opening of the market is critical to the idea of comprehensive analysis and review of the implications for Australia of an FTA. Papers from the conference and the report, which was released in late August, are available on the centre's website at www.apec.org.au.

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Getting to the heart of coronary disease

By Melville Gardner

An international computer program being designed at Monash University uses a mathematical formula to assess a person's risk of developing and dying from coronary heart disease.

The interactive Take Heart program should be available by 2000 to clinicians, particularly GPs, as a tool for assessing patients' risk of developing the disease.

Factors that affect the potential for developing heart disease - the leading cause of death and disability in Australia - include, age, sex, blood pressure and cholesterol levels and whether or not a person smokes.

Take Heart is being developed by the Epidemiological Modelling Unit of the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine in the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. Program designers include Professor John McNeil, Dr Anna Pertot, Dr Theo Nui, Dr Danny Liew and PhD student Mr Stephen Lim.

The program involves blood pressure and cholesterol levels being measured and stored, then producing graphical and text reports that detail a person's risk of developing or dying from heart disease. It also produces scenarios that assess the likely effect of reducing particular risk factors such as cholesterol levels.

Dr Lim said Take Heart was developed as a preventive measure to aid health practitioners in the identification, assessment, treatment and evaluation of people at high risk of cardiovascular disease.

A prototype was developed with the Occupational Health Services of BP Australia, which has been using it to provide a heart disease risk assessment service to its employees.

The Monash team is currently negotiating with a software company to make a more robust version of the program, which will include information specific to Australia on the risk of developing the disease, and will take into account other risk factors such as LDL and HDL cholesterol, and whether a person has a history of heart disease or diabetes.

Dr Lim says that while the GP version is still in the early stages of development, it will provide doctors with an understanding of a patient's future risk, as well as offer a stimulus for lifestyle change.

"The aim of the program is primary prevention of heart disease in those at very high risk, and we are not necessarily advocating that everyone needs to change their lifestyle to avoid heart disease, but it is useful in identifying people who are at high risk and so they can be more closely monitored." he said.

"About 900 employees have participated in Take Heart, with the majority having had heart disease problems in the past two-and-a-half years," she said.

BP corporate medical adviser Dr Catherine Hamilton stressed the program was useful only if health professionals were able to re-orient behaviour likely to reduce risk, and that it made it difficult for people to evade uncomfortable truths.

"The program has a terrific 'what if' capacity that can show people how a change or a series of changes (often small) will make a big difference to both their life expectancy and quality of life," she said.

Dr Lim said Take Heart could also be an important tool for better targeting cholesterol-lowering medication, particularly since more than $600 million Government money was spent on it annually.

"These drugsm called statins, reduce heart disease risk by about one third, but because of their high cost they need to be given to patients who will benefit the most, that is, those at the highest risk of heart disease," Mr Lim said.

"Take Heart provides a relatively simple method of calculating heart disease risk, it could prove an ideal way of using statins in a more cost-effective way."
Monash University has awarded Distinguished Alumni Awards to four of its outstanding graduates.

**The Revered Tim Cantlie Hills, LLB, DipEd, Monash, BD BITS (Rmitbak), The Principal and Director of the Calile Hill Baptist Church Urban Mission Unit, Melbourne.**

Mr Cantlie is widely recognised as a champion of local democracy, a community leader and an advocate for the socially disadvantaged and the homeless.

**Professor Paul Phangboonshic MSc, Monash, PhD, CANTAB, Chairperson, Economic Development Board, and co-chairman, National Science and Technology Board, Government of Singapore.**

Mr Phangboonshic is well known for his influential public administration and economic development and he has played the role of a key person in sustaining Singapore’s role as a world leader in science, technology and entrepreneurship.

The awards are presented annually by the University to outstanding graduates, and the recipients have demonstrated excellence in their respective fields.

**Professor Margaret Leggett, AM, D(Syd), PHD (Arts Monash), Immediate past president of the World Fellowship for Schizophrenics and Allied Disorders.**

Professor Leggett has helped to address and ameliorate the insensitive treatment of people with mental illnesses and to raise the public’s consciousness of their needs.

**Mr Tan Mee Kiong BE(Hons) Monash, MSc, MIT, chairman, Economic Development Board, and co-chairman, National Science and Technology Board, Government of Singapore.**

Mr Kiong is highly influential in public administration and economic development and has played a key role in sustaining Singapore’s role as a world leader in science, technology and entrepreneurship.

The Distinguished Alumni Awards were presented to these four outstanding graduates in a ceremony held at Clayton campus.

The recipients were presented with plaques and certificates of recognition, and were invited to speak about their experiences and achievements.

After the ceremony, the recipients were available for interviews and photo opportunities.

Monash University distinguished alumni medals are presented each year to Monash graduates or alumni who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievements.

The recipients include Dr Margaret Leggett, Dr Paul Phangboonshic, Dr Paul Cantlie, and Mr Tan Mee Kiong.

The award recipients were presented with plaques and certificates of recognition, and were invited to speak about their experiences and achievements.

The recipients were also available for interviews and photo opportunities.

The Distinguished Alumni Awards were presented to these four outstanding graduates in a ceremony held at Clayton campus.

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New report targets hospital emergency departments

By DEREK BROWN

A new report and training package released last month by Monash Medical Centre promises to deliver improved practices in the Victorian public hospital system, especially in the area of emergency care.

'The Consistency of Triage in Victorian Emergency Departments', prepared by the Centre for Nursing Research, part of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences' Institute of Health Services Research, involved staff from 29 emergency departments across metropolitan and rural Victoria.

The report was commissioned by the Victorian Department of Human Services because inconsistencies in the delivery of triage between different hospital emergency departments were perceived as a contributing factor to delays in patients receiving treatment.

Triage is a classification system used by nurses to assess patients presenting for emergency care. The system is used to arrange the severity of the patient's illness or injury and to decide whether immediate action is needed or treatment can be delayed.

According to the report, assessments made during the triage process have a direct impact on the health and recovery of a patient, and an incorrect decision can mean life-saving treatment is delayed.

A number of factors, including a nurse's gender, age, and whether or not they had an undergraduate degree, influence their triage decision-making process, the report revealed, but could not be isolated from environmental factors such as the use of hospital guidelines and protocols or activity levels in the emergency ward.

The report made it clear that while some inaccuracies in triage were inevitable because of the diverse nature of the environment, important similarities exist that can be improved on with consistent guidelines and continuing education.

It also argued that triage decision-making is based on verbal and visual clues that cannot be reproduced in print form and discovered that nurses consistently tested better with visual computer-based scenarios when compared to paper-based scenarios.

Director of the Institute of Health Services Research Professor Chris Slagle said there was strong evidence that the development of guidelines with appropriate support such as audit tools and continuing education could lead to improvements in practice and, ultimately, better outcomes for patients.

Copies of the summary report are available in print form and discovered that triage and continuing education are delayed. and continuing education.

Vital step: Assessments during triage directly affect the recovery of a patient. Picture: Photodisc

Adults in mathematics

By DEREK BROWN

Australians who lack mathematical skills may miss out on tertiary education and be passed over for promotion, according to a Monash University academic.

Dr Gill FitzSimons, a researcher in the Faculty of Education at Monash and co-editor of two new books looking at adult education in mathematics, says mathematics often acts as a barrier to higher paid employment or further study.

"To get into some jobs, people are expected to have a certain level of numeracy, even if the level demanded is beyond that required," she said.

"Without a basic mathematical knowledge, employees may find they cannot move into the job they would like or are not eligible for promotion." 

Dr FitzSimons believes there are a number of reasons why some adults have not developed adequate mathematical skills.

"Many adults have trouble with mathematics because they were not given sufficient access to this kind of education when they were young or because their experience with learning mathematics has been unpleasant," she said.

"In particular, girls who went to school in Australia during the 1940s and 1950s weren't always given the chance to do the same mathematics as the boys. Instead they were given subjects to prepare them for domestic and family responsibilities. This obviously restricted the choices available to them after they left school."

According to Dr FitzSimons, adults' experiences of maths education colour their reaction to mathematics as a whole.

These reactions are often negative and can be linked to traumatic experiences, such as a teacher who punished them or told them they were stupid when they made a mistake.

But despite the strong sentiments against mathematics, many adults are returning to study to develop and expand their mathematical knowledge, according to Dr FitzSimons.

"Adult students are working on gaining mathematics skills in order to take on a more fulfilling career or tertiary study. However, one of the strongest incentives is for people who want to help their children with homework," she said.

Dr FitzSimons hopes the books, Adult and Lifelong Education in Mathematics, published by Language Australia, and Perspectives on Adult Learning Mathematics, from Kluwer Academic Publishers, re-edited with prominent academics in the field, will help raise awareness on the importance of adult learning in mathematics.