Death rate lower in IVF patients: research

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Australian women who undergo IVF treatment have a lower death rate than other women, according to new Monash University research.

The Monash research team investigated outcomes for nearly 30,000 women who had been referred to IVF clinics throughout Australia before 1994. The study included both treated and untreated women.

The team's aim was to determine whether deaths were a result of treatment complications or other factors. They studied data from 17,112 women who had been referred for IVF treatment and 26,000 others who had not.

Prof. Dr. Healy said possible but uncommon complications of IVF and related assisted reproductive technologies could be life-threatening. He said deaths were a result of treatment complications.

Professor Healy said it's possible but unlikely that IVF treatment could increase the death rate in women who have undergone fertility treatment.

"Overall, deaths from all causes were significantly lower in IVF patients than in the general female population of the same age," he said.

Among the 17,112 women who had undergone IVF treatment, there appeared to be no deaths due to complications of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome, a condition that can be life-threatening.

He said the most likely explanation for the low mortality rate is the selection factors that make IVF patients different from the general population.

Previous studies have shown that married, wealthy and educated women live longer than single, poor and uneducated women.

"These factors may have contributed to the low mortality rate, since the majority of women in the study were married and had private health insurance, which suggests higher socioeconomic status in Australia," Professor Healy said.

"As well as providing some reassurance about the safety of IVF treatment, the study indicates that selection processes deter the unhealthiest women to the population from pregnancy and infertility treatment."  

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Students take the Melbourne Motor Show by storm

Industrial design student Mr Brendan Carroll is pictured with his 'Urban Assault Vehicle' on display at the Melbourne Motor Show this month.

Monash's Faculty of Art and Design was the only non-commercial vendor to be offered a place at the Motor Show this year. The 13-day event is expected to attract more than 250,000 visitors.

The exciting concept vehicles, designed and built by Monash industrial design students, show what cars might be like in 10 years' time. The designs incorporate new technologies and take environmental concerns and behaviour of transport users into account.

The models will be displayed under the banner of 'Forecast Motors', featuring large-scale drawings and plans of the vehicles and computer terminals which enable users to manipulate images of the models.

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Director of Animal Services at Monash Mr Stephen Marshall welcomed the grant.

"This is recognition of Monash as having the people who can build the facility and manage it on behalf of the NHMRC, the investigators and the wider community," he said.

The decision was made to set up and extend the facility at the Gippsland site to create a building of between 1500 and 2000 square metres. The new primate facility will house long-tail and short-tailed macaques and marmosets, which will primarily be used in biomedical research.

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Design work is due to begin on the primate facility in April. Construction is scheduled to commence mid-year, with completion expected by early 2003.

Mary Viscovich

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Opinion

A new era for teaching

The teaching profession is now enjoying unprecedented popularity, but more teacher training places need to be made available to sustain the momentum, advises educationist Professor Sue Willis.

Monash in Olympic coup

Monash University will facilitate information sharing between Olympic host cities in a new partnership with the IOC.

$5 million grant win

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Mr Marshall said it would also have a major welfare focus, offering a 'geriatric unit' for older primates who have passed their prime for research.

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Major grant for malaria research

Monash has been part of a revered global assault on malaria—a disease that kills more than one million children and infects 500 million people annually.

Professor Capell said he was excited about the potential of the research. "Diseases of the Third World tend not to attract the attention of large pharmaceutical companies because the return on investment is low and the high costs of drug and vaccine development cannot be recouped."

"The support of MVF allows us to take our research to a more advanced stage, so that companies can become involved when efficacy has already been demonstrated. This minimises their risk and makes involvement in malaria research economical for them."

Deputy vice-chancellor (Research and Development) Professor Peter Thrall said Monash was one of only three Australian research organisations selected for funding in vaccine development projects.

Students take the Melbourne Motor Show by storm

More than 500 people attended a free seminar last week at Monash's SSilo AO at the Melbourne Museum last month.

"Professor Silagyi was internationally recognised for his work in the field of evidence-based medicine."

A professor of Public Health at Monash, he was also director of the Australian Cochrane Centre and chair of the Board of the newly formed National Institute of Clinical Effectiveness (Australia). He was a member of numerous international and national committees, including the National Health and Medical Research Committee (NHMRC) Health Advisory Committee. In 2000, he was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia. He was also a passionate advocate of an evidence-based approach to health care, and of the important role that consumers had to play within the process.

"Chris was also known for his vision, drive and tremendous energy. Few people can have accomplished as much as he did, let alone one so tragically foreshortened," he said.

The late Professor Chris Silagyi. "To say he was an inspiration devalues the man. Chris was a dynamo, a whiz-bang, an energy and enthusiasm who touched everyone in contact with him."

"His work with the Cochrane Collaboration, his successes at the Monash Institute of Health Research and his vision for the National Institute of Clinical Studies are tangible reminders of his achievements that we work with every day."

"We will honour his memory by continuing his plans for the Monash Institute of Health Services Research."

"To help achieve Professor Silagyi's vision, the Monash Institute of Health Services Research established the 'Monash University Medical Foundation - Chris Silagyi Fund'. Donations can be made to the Institute at Level 1, Block E, Locked Bag 29, Monash Medical Centre, Clayton, Victoria, 3168. For more information, contact +61 3 9594 7501.

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"This is a place rich in resources and they offer in Canberra, I now know although we as educators often work

History student teachers lend expertise to national museums

Twelve Monash history student teachers last year had the opportunity to put their studies into practice at two of Australia's leading cultural institutions after being awarded teaching history fellowships.

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IOC and Monash combine on Olympic Games know-how

OLYMPICS

The knowledge gained from running an Olympic Games will now be shared among the world's sporting bodies in an agreement between Monash and the International Olympic Committee, launched in Salt Lake City last month.

The establishment of Olympic Games Knowledge Services (OGKS) signifies an unprecedented level of organisational support for Olympic host cities, cities aspiring to host a future Olympic Games, and, potentially, organisations of other major international events. At the official launch of OGKS at the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, the president of the IOC, Dr Jacques Rogge, hailed the creation of the program as an Olympic milestone and an integral part of the IOC Games support system.

The plan to set up a formal program to transfer Olympic knowledge was initiated by the IOC at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney in conjunction with the Sydney Organising Committee (SOCOG). The goal was to capture the know-how of Olympic Games organising committees and prepare written guides and other educational material to assist future committees in meeting their enormous task.

To enhance this program, the IOC established OGKS to provide complex knowledge management services. OGKS is a joint venture of the IOC and Monash Ed a Monash University company in partnership with Cambridge Consulting and Equiset Global.

Monash vice-chancellor Professor David Robinson said the university's partnership with the IOC reflected Monash's acknowledged expertise in global educational services.

"With almost 50,000 students on campuses across four continents, Monash is well placed to provide the same level of knowledge management services. We are delighted that our skills have been recognised as being adaptable to such a dynamic field as the organisation of the world's most high-profile sporting events," he said.

OGKS gathers particular strengths in the rapidly growing field of knowledge management, a field in which Australia and New Zealand are globally recognised as leaders.

OGKS will deliver a range of services such as:

• conferences, seminars and briefings led by OGKS staff or expert consultants;
• education and consulting services including a range of printed and online information;
• research facilities including statistical analysis and benchmarking.

Prof. Dick Gunstone, head of OGKS, said the centre will be an integral part of the 10C Games "in a world first, a rare Poitou donkey foal has been born to a surrogate mare after embryo transfer from the biological mother, which was surgically sterilised by its breeding partner."

The foal brings to three the number of Poitou donkeys in Australia. The foal was born in January under the guidance of Dr Angus McKinnon, an honorary research fellow at Monash's Institute of Reproduction and Development (IRD).

"We are thrilled that one of the world's most endangered donkey breeds is thriving in Australia," said Dr McKinnon. "This is a world leader in the field. We have many more projects in the pipeline, including the possibility of transferring embryos to other countries."
New cervical cancer screening hope

MEDICINE

Monash University researchers are testing a new device with the potential to revolutionise screening for cervical cancer.

The device, which was developed by Australian company Opticam Pty Ltd, is a probe about the size of a ball-point pen that enables high magnification of intact living tissue.

Currently, management of cervical cancer involves the Papanicolaou (Pap) smear screening test in conjunction with follow-up examinations. A biopsy of cervical tissue is then required for a definitive diagnosis. While a Pap smear only removes very superficial cells, the new probe, called a rigid endomicroscope, can view several cell layers beneath the surface — without disturbing the tissue.

Cervical cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer in the western world, with an estimated 1000 new cases and 300 deaths in Australia each year.

Associate Professor Graham Jenkins, of the Department of Physiology in the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, said he believed the device, which is being tested on live sheep and on human tissue, showed enormous potential.

"I have no doubt this will revolutionise testing for and monitoring of cervical cancer — it will make detection more efficient and more comfortable because cell structures can be seen in situ without surgically removing them for pathology," he said.

"Digital images of cells magnified 1000 fold appear in real time on a computer screen, enabling immediate detection of changes in cellular structure. "This new device works in a non-invasive manner with immediate results — which is obviously preferable to the doctor last patient. "Dr Wendy McLaren, a scientist at Opticam who also holds a part-time research position at Monash University, said the device used laser light in conjunction with optical fibre technology to allow instant examination of cellular changes.

"This will be particularly useful for repeat examination of patients predisposed to cancer, such as those with a family history of the disease," she said.

"The device will enable early detection of morphological changes at the cellular level before they show up at the macroscopic level, when it's often too late for curative treatment. "She said testing of the device on patients is expected to begin within the next year.

Allison Harding

Celebrant lends expertise to new professional code

MARRIAGE

As the only Australian tertiary institution to offer training for civil celebrants, Monash University is working with the Attorney-General's Department to develop competency standards for aspiring civil marriage celebrants.

Monash civil ceremonies course coordinator and celebrant Ms Judy Watt has been invited to help develop the competencies, along with representatives of celebrant organisations. The revision of standards comes with the re-introduction into Parliament last month of the Marriage Amendment Bill 2002, which aims to raise professional standards in celebrancy services, for civil and religious celebrants.

The bill contains a range of reforms designed to raise the level of professional standards required of celebrants, and to capitalise on their unique position to encourage and promote pre-marriage and other relationship education services.

According to Ms Watt, celebrants are currently appointed by the Attorney-General's Department on the basis that they are 'fit and proper' persons to take on the role and that a celebrant is needed in their local area. "In the moment, anyone can apply and be appointed as a civil celebrant without any checks as to whether they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to perform this important community role," Ms Watt said.

The legislation will require that new celebrants undertake formal training, to be underpinned by a set of competency standards. Existing celebrants will be required to undertake professional development.

Ms Watt said Monash's Graduate Diploma of Arts (Civil Ceremonies) trained participants to conduct ceremonies not only for marriages but also for a range of lifecycle events including funerals, name-givings, major anniversaries, divorces, citizenship and retirement.

From March to October this year, Monash is hosting a series of public lectures, 'Lives of passage: marking life and death in contemporary Australia', featuring leading civil celebrants and speakers from a range of religious traditions.

For more information on the graduate diploma or public lectures, contact Ms Judy Watt on +61 3 9905 2036.

Howzat!

A Queensland player is caught and bowled by a Tasmanian cricketer in a match played during the Under 19 Australian Women's Cricket Championships held at Monash's Clayton campus recently. The final saw New South Wales triumph over Victoria in a fiercely contested game. Individual highlights of the tournament included centuries scored by Victorian Candice Hulet and New South Wales team members Leith Poulsen and Sarah Akey, and Western Australian captain Renee Chappell's last-wicket against the ACB Invitational Team. Photo Greg Ford
Teaching: the way forward

After years in the wilderness, the status of teaching and the state of education is now back on the national agenda. But to improve the quality of our education system and maintain renewed interest in the profession, there must be an increase in the number of teacher training places, warns Monash University educationist PROFESSOR SUE WILLIS.

That the local railway station was covered in graffiti was due to poor discipline in schools (or was it a lack of opportunity to express expression?) - I forget which). Schools were either outdated, unresponsive and irrelevant to the majority of students, or pand­ ered to trendy new ideas and the 'basics' must be the explanation. A boring curriculum caused teenagers to 'wag' which, in turn, caused our houses to be burgled.

And so what has changed? About four years ago, it became clear that the predictions of teacher shortages were not exaggerated. The rate at which teachers were leaving the profession was increasing.

There was considerable talking down of the teaching profession by public figures engaged in pay disputes. Efficiencies introduced to balance the budget were seen as simple cost-cutting measures which reduced teachers' capacity to provide quality education. Job satisfaction was low and many teachers were simply fed up - and said so.

Meanwhile, the Australian Council of Deans of Education, which had for a number of years commissioned well-researched studies of supply and demand, were warning of coming and potentially widespread teacher shortages. On the whole, their concerns were dismissed as unfounded.

Unless there is an increase in the number of teachers graduating, particularly in areas of shortage, we will not gain the benefits of the increase in applications.

Photo Shany Balansette, Newspix

Perceptions about teacher shortages leading to a good job market, improved salaries and career prospects, and the general affirmation of teaching as a choice have all contributed to the increased attractiveness of teacher education and to the academic quality of students entering teaching.

Unfortunately, this has not been accompanied by an increase in the number of places. At the undergraduate diploma level, the area of fastest growth which offers the quickest mechanism for overcoming specific areas of shortage, we are unable even to offer free-paying places, since there is a specific embargo on us doing so.

We will be graduating excellent teachers who can make a difference, but we will not be graduating enough of them or enough of them in the right areas. Unless there is an increase in the number of teachers graduating, particularly in areas of shortage, we will not gain the benefits of the increase in applications. Some schools will continue to be forced to resort to less well-qualified or 'fast-tracked' teachers, or to those teaching outside their area of expertise. All children deserve good teachers, and as a country we are now in a position to ensure that they get them. But to achieve this, we need to open up more places in teacher education.

• Professor Sue Willis is dean of the Faculty of Education at Monash University.
ARTSCENE

Lecturer wins Australia Council residency

Monash fine arts lecturer and ceramic artist Michael Dowlen has been awarded a prestigious three-month Australia Council residency in London. The residency, awarded by the Australia Council Visual Arts Craft Fund, will offer the artist a collaborative environment and support for his creative practice during his stay from July to September this year.

Mr Dowlen, a lecturer in ceramics at Monash since 1987, specialises in making oversized ceramic toys that explore themes of innocence and childhood. During the residency, he intends to experience the London art scene, conducting research and further developing his work.

Staff exhibitions on display at Gippsland

Two Monash staff will exhibit their work at Gippsland’s Switchback Gallery this month.

Monash’s Faculty of Art staff member David Hugh Thomas’s exhibition, ‘Works on Paper’, is a collection of his ink sketched since 1997. From the artist’s surfing adventures as a teenager, to his heroes of the 1970s, the sketches represent a time, place and people that have touched or influenced his life.

Thomas returned to Australia in 1997 after spending five years as an artist in New York, where he painted Sunday in the Park With George. The play opens with a scene from Georges Seurat painting 'Sunday Afternoon on the Island of la Grande Jatte' in a musical spanning two centuries.

Nuptial bonds’ by Karleena Mitchell

Glass artworks created by Monash students and alumni are on show at the university’s Faculty of Art and Design. This month is a time for exhibition displaying works by finalists of the 2003 Rannoch Glass Prize.

The prize, now in its sixth year, showcases the latest developments in contemporary glasswork. Five students and seven alumni from Monash’s Faculty of Art and Design were among 35 finalists vying for the prestigious prize, which attracted more than 100 entrants from Australia and New Zealand.

The exhibition features Monash, students Lisa Callih, Marcus Dittows, Karleena Mitchell, Fiona Ruttelle and Crystal Stubbs and faculty alumni Natasha Filippelli, Philip Stokes and Maureen Williams.

A diverse range of works is on show, including Karleena Mitchell’s ‘Nuptial Bonds’, a personal homage to her 25-year marriage represented by a glass foot sitting next to a bronze foot, and Lisa Callih’s ‘Facade’, which uses glass to depict the basic elements of a landscape.
A new biography of former Whitlam government treasurer Dr Jim Cairns provides a fascinating insight into the life of Jim Cairns. Dr Strangio said his book challenges the popular myth that the ALP was always opposed to the Vietnam War. The left wing of the ALP and a handful of left-wingers led by Cairns who were consistently opposed to the Vietnam War. The team led by Cairns and Whittam, were not opposed to it initially, he said.

One of the sub-themes of the book is the great Cairns and Whitlam ideological and political rivalry, Dr Strangio said. "Within the ALP Whittam is the icon, Cairns has been marginalised, and the victims write the history - to some degree that is what has happened." While much has been written of Cairns in the context of 1975, Dr Strangio said, very little of his post-1975 career has been documented. "His whole life has been a search for the secret recipe for a good society. In the early 1900s, Cairns said that everything he fought for - socialism, imperial cooperation - had all amounted to 'a hill of beans'. It was such a sad, poignant thing to say.""There is a lovely quote by Max Teichmann, a former Monash academic, that Cairns didn't leave a legacy of darts and bridges - but he stood for alternative values, and that is vital in any healthy democracy." - Mary Viscovich

Performance artist to be awarded honorary doctorate

Monash University will this month award Australian-based international performance artist Stelarc an honorary doctorate. Stelarc will receive the award on 21 March at the Robert Blackwood Performance space at Monash University. Stelarc has achieved a high level of international recognition in the field of conceptual, performance and digital art. His work explores and extends the concept of body art. His work explores and extends the concept of body art. He has made, and continues to make, a major contribution to discourse on contemporary art through regular presentations in scholarly and public forums. The honorary doctorate recognizes his significant achievements, he said.

"Stelarc has been active in the Faculty of Art and Design since his graduation. He took up an honorary position in 1997 and participated in the 1999 Alumni Exhibitions, which marked the opening of the new Art and Design building at the Caulfield campus. "We are very pleased to welcome him back as artist-in-residence in June and eagerly anticipate his valuable contribution to faculty life." - Dean of Monash's Faculty of Art and Design Professor John Redmond said the award was recognition of Stelarc's contribution to international contemporary art.

Nietzsche in Context

Nietzsche in Context is a broad, accessible survey and exegesis of Nietzsche and his work in the context of philosophy of his own time. Altogether at least a wider readers as well as Nietzsche scholars, it is the first book to relate Nietzsche with those contemporaries who influenced him rather than to those who are well known today.

The book draws on original sources which have never been discussed in English and which have been inaccessible to many readers. It also considers important new material. Nietzsche in Context goes beyond historical scholarship by including original philosophical analysis and interpretation of the ideas under discussion. - Robin Smill Published by Atheneum RRP: $55 (paperback)

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- CITSSU (Canfield) +61 3 9951 1277 • Clayton +61 3 9905 3111
- Gippstown +61 3 5122 1771 • Peninsula +61 3 9783 6932
www.monash.edu.au

The Australian Judiciary

The Australian Judiciary By Enid Campbell and H. P. Lee Published by Cambridge University Press RRP: $57

As a society regulated by the rule of law, we often place our faith in judicial institutions such as the courts and tribunals to protect our rights and solve our conflicts. The judges in charge of these institutions help contribute to the development and reinforcement of our laws and regulations. The Australian Judiciary helps provide a better understanding of the judicial system within Australia. It provides information about the history, training, techniques, problems and future of the system as well as an analysis of various aspects of the system. - H. P Lee is the Sir John Latham Professor of Law at Monash University and the author of many legal books on Australia, Singapore and Malaysia. Enid Campbell is Emeritus Professor of Law at Monash University and the author of several legal publications.

INprint

Sunday in the Park With George

The performance features Dett Humphries as the old and young Georges and Laura Fitzpatrick as the central character Dot. The first act and then her daughter, among an outstanding cast of graduating students from the Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies.

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Dr Jim Cairns with Junie Morosi in 1974.

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Performance artist to be awarded honorary doctorate

Monash University will this month award Australian-based international performance artist Stelarc an honorary doctorate. Stelarc will receive the award on 21 March at the Robert Blackwood Performance space at Monash University. Stelarc has achieved a high level of international recognition in the field of conceptual, performance and digital art. His work explores and extends the concept of body art. His work explores and extends the concept of body art. He has made, and continues to make, a major contribution to discourse on contemporary art through regular presentations in scholarly and public forums. The honorary doctorate recognizes his significant achievements, he said.

"Stelarc has been active in the Faculty of Art and Design since his graduation. He took up an honorary position in 1997 and participated in the 1999 Alumni Exhibitions, which marked the opening of the new Art and Design building at the Caulfield campus. "We are very pleased to welcome him back as artist-in-residence in June and eagerly anticipate his valuable contribution to faculty life." - Dean of Monash’s Faculty of Art and Design Professor John Redmond said the award was recognition of Stelarc’s contribution to international contemporary art.

Nietzsche in Context

Nietzsche in Context is a broad, accessible survey and exegesis of Nietzsche and his work in the context of philosophy of his own time. Altogether at least a wider readers as well as Nietzsche scholars, it is the first book to relate Nietzsche with those contemporaries who influenced him rather than to those who are well known today.

The book draws on original sources which have never been discussed in English and which have been inaccessible to many readers. It also considers important new material. Nietzsche in Context goes beyond historical scholarship by including original philosophical analysis and interpretation of the ideas under discussion. - Robin Smill Published by Atheneum RRP: $55 (paperback)

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The Australian Judiciary

The Australian Judiciary By Enid Campbell and H. P. Lee Published by Cambridge University Press RRP: $57

As a society regulated by the rule of law, we often place our faith in judicial institutions such as the courts and tribunals to protect our rights and solve our conflicts. The judges in charge of these institutions help contribute to the development and reinforcement of our laws and regulations. The Australian Judiciary helps provide a better understanding of the judicial system within Australia. It provides information about the history, training, techniques, problems and future of the system as well as an analysis of various aspects of the system. - H. P Lee is the Sir John Latham Professor of Law at Monash University and the author of many legal books on Australia, Singapore and Malaysia. Enid Campbell is Emeritus Professor of Law at Monash University and the author of several legal publications.
MUARC and TAC promote anti-speeding message

ACCIDENT RESEARCH

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) and its recently signed sponsor partner Collingwood Football Club launched a new road safety campaign at Monash University’s Accident Research Centre (MUARC) recently.

The new, powerful and emotive 'Wipe off 5' advertising campaign, aimed at reducing speed, reinforces that even low-level speeding can have tragic consequences.

'The 'Wipe off 5' message came about after research conducted by MUARC showed that even small changes in speed can mean the difference between death and a serious injury, or a serious injury and a minor injury.

According to the research, a car travelling at 60 kilometres per hour will take 45 metres to stop in an emergency braking situation, whereas a car braking at 25 kilometres per hour will still be travelling at 32 kilometres per hour after 45 metres.

Director of MUARC Dr Ian Johnston said travelling five kilometres per hour above the limit was risky. "Five kilometres per hour extra increases the chance of death by 10 per cent and the chance of serious injury by 50 per cent," he said.

Joining the fight against speed is Collingwood Football Club, who has just signed a three-year sponsorship deal with the TAC. The TAC has increased its sponsorship involvement with the club to promote its anti-speeding messages in schools and the wider community.

Robot demonstrates the fine art of Chinese calligraphy

ENGINEERING

A group of engineering students at Monash University have put the boundaries of robotics and engineering to the test to create a robotic arm that writes in Chinese.

As part of a class project, five final-year mechatronics students aimed to develop a different application from the usual robotic functions such as turing and assembly work or with manufacturing and on assembly lines.

According to team member Mr Danny Leong, the group decided to write simple Chinese characters on Chinese calligraphic writing, as they wanted to prove that robots could perform more than just routine applications.

"We wanted to show people that robots could do fine work such as calligraphy. Most people, robotic systems are associated with manufacturing and assembly work or with remote and hazardous environments," he said.

The students created the robot by combining their knowledge of aspects of mechanical engineering, electronics, computer science and computer control systems such as sensors and actuator technology.

Mr Leong said the most challenging part of the project was identifying the basic system in calligraphic writing and then programming the system. "The robotic arm has the capacity to write simple Chinese characters and numerals. We are developing the application further to enhance the robot's versatility so that it can write phrases and art works," he said.

The project was undertaken by final-year mechatronics engineering students taking the Intelligent Robotics design unit.

The unit was developed to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed for designing, building and operating intelligent products and systems.

A demonstration of the robotic calligraphy took place during Monash Malaysia’s Open Day earlier this year.

Janice Houghton