Breakthrough in early detection of autism

Children who test positive to autism can now receive earlier specialist intervention.

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It’s a war on the field for our troops

Most injuries sustained by Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel are the result of training and sports activities, a Monash University study has shown.

The Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) study, commissioned by the ADF, showed that injuries sustained during physical training resulted in the highest number of working days lost.

Physical training accounts for three times the number of casualities incurred during all other activities such as combat training and tactical exercises.

According to MUARC research fellow and author of the report Dr Jennifer Sherrard, while participating in sport and training is good for morale and physical well-being, it also increases the risk of injury.

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MEDICAL RESEARCH

Children with autism are now being diagnosed as young as 18 months of age using a basic screening system developed by Monash University researchers.

Ending years of frustration and anxiety for parents, the Early Screen system, developed by the Monash University Centre for Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology, has the potential to reduce the average age of diagnosis from six years to two. This screening means children who test positive to autism can now be referred earlier for a diagnostic assessment and begin early intervention.

Monash PhD candidate and researcher Ms Kylie Gray, who developed the screening system, said early diagnosis was essential to be able to identify at-risk children for referral to specialist autism assessment teams.

"Research has demonstrated that it is essential to start early intervention, before the age of four, while the child's brain is still developing, so that the intervention will have a greater impact on the child's development," she said.

The Early Screen was based on the Developmental Behaviour Checklist created in 1990 by Monash professor of psychiatry Professor Bruce Tonge and Professor Stewart Einfeld from the University of New South Wales. The checklist was developed to assess behavioral and emotional problems in children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities.

"Previously, the checklist could be used to screen for autism in young people aged four to 18 years," Ms Gray said. "But part of my PhD work was to look at whether we could extract items from that questionnaire to develop the screen for very young children."

An initial community pilot with 26 children aged two to four was conducted through Southern Health's Specialist Children's Services.

"Joy child in the 18- to 45-month age range who came in with suspected developmental delay was given the DBC Early Screen," Ms Gray said.

"I assessed the children, with no knowledge of the results of the screening instrument. Then I looked at whether the screen was accurate picking up those children that we had diagnosed with autism."

In a group of 60 autistic and 60 non-autistic children, the results showed the DBC Early Screen was accurate in predicting autism in 82 per cent of cases. In some cases, children as young as 18 months were diagnosed.

Ms Gray and Professor Tonge have now applied to the National Health and Medical Research Council for funding to commence a large-scale community field trial. Their aim is to develop a package of material for early childhood services to start using as part of their standard assessment process.

"As clinicians, we often hear stories of parents who say they knew early on there was something wrong with their child, but they just didn't get the assistance they needed," Ms Gray said.

Continued on page 2
Of mice and (wo)men?

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Better treatment for women who suffer from infertility or menopausal problems may result from new research at Monash University and Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research. The findings, by PhD student Kara Britt, may answer questions about whether the sex of an embryo is improved by follicle growth in most of female mice that have been genetically engineered to be estrogen-free - ArKO mice could be the model that Ms Britt's research has found that, in will... of hormones in menopausal women who also experience low...estrogen, Ms Britt said.

"The role of estrogen in those within a female through the removal of at the Monash University's Molecular Biology at Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research, a leading hormone research centre based at the Monash Medical Centre in Melbourne. The significance of her work was recognized in January when she was named 2001 Young Australian of the Year by the Australian of the In her research, Ms Britt said the..."female hormone", in ovarian follicle development. Follicles are the housing units of the ovaries, she explained, growing hormone research and...ovarian development means the...by replacing estrogen pellets under the skin, Research."

"Not only were follicle, egg and...ovarian development i..."female hormone", in ovarian follicle development. Follicles are the housing units of the ovaries, she explained, growing hormone research and...ovarian development means the...by replacing estrogen pellets under the skin, Research."
Four calves lead the way to better dairy products

ANIMAL SCIENCE

The birth of Australia's first genetically modified calves this month signaled an important milestone in the development of Australian animal breeding technologies. A group of Victorian researchers, including a team from Monash University, has produced four genetically modified female calves, each with an additional gene for milk protein production. The calves were cloned from the same cell line and genetically modified.

Dr Ian Lewis, the senior scientist at Monash Institute of Reproduction and Development, Professor Alan Trounson, said the expansion of collaborative research involving the Monash Institute of Reproduction and Development's expertise in assisted reproduction and cloning techniques, the Victorian Institute of Animal Science's understanding of gene technologies, and Geri Australia's experience in cattle breeding.

In the past two years, the team has also collaborated with Geri Australia's first cloned cows, Sue and Mayai, and the first cloned bull, Ramson II.

The goal of this latest research project, principally funded by the Dairy Research Development Corporation (DRDC), is to establish the technologies to ultimately produce more nutritious dairy products. The extra gene will hopefully increase the protein content in the milk from these cows.

"This is an important step in our long-term quest to produce better dairy products at a better price," said Dr Lewis. "Our aim is to develop new and improved dairy products that will add value for the consumer, for dairy farmers and for the Australian economy."

However, these potential dairy products are several years away from being commercially available.

Holly and Molly, 'twins' born from the same surrogate cow on 7 January, were Australia's first genetically modified calves. Holly and Molly were born about seven weeks later and are genetically identical to the first two.

"Cows normally carry four protein genes. We increased this to five during the cloning process in the laboratory before implanting the cloned embryo in the surrogate cow," Dr Lewis explained.

The deputy director of the Monash Institute of Reproduction and Development, Professor Alan Trounson, said the expansion of Australian cloning expertise in this area would be significant for medical research.

"Being able to add specific genes to cloned calves will provide us with the potential to produce milk containing human vaccines and medicines for diseases such as haemophilia," Professor Trounson said. "These would be produced much more cheaply than using current pharmaceutical manufacturing systems."

Mr Bob Morton, from the Dairy Research Development Corporation, said the birth of the calves was an important step for the Australian dairy industry.

"It brings the possibilities just one more step - and an important step - closer. Developments of this kind will help ensure our dairy industry remains competitive in world markets," he said.

Other genetically modified animals, such as pigs, have previously been produced in Australia for medical research purposes.

The research partners said they were looking forward to the birth of more genetically modified calves over the next few months.

To see photos of the calves, visit www.monasstitute.org/news/ media.htm

Surviving orientation

South Africa students having fun Monash-style.

Monash's own version of 'Survivor' was just one of the many events organized to welcome new students to Monash campuses during orientation activities held over three continents in 2002.

"Orientation at each campus always has its own distinctive feel. The aim is the same across all campuses - to introduce first-year students to the academic and social aspects of university life."

At the South Africa campus, about 100 students took part in a series of challenges in Survivor - the Real African Outdoor, including riding a mechanical bull, a blind water run and a hula hoop contest.

"One of the issues is that the resources themselves need to be tailored information about the disease. Monash's Enterprise Information Research Group (EIRG) is working on the Breast Cancer Knowledge Online Project - an initiative that aims to help women with breast cancer find reliable facts about the disease that kills 2500 Australian women each year. Funded by the Australian Research Council's Linkage Program, the web-based portal will allow users to select the type and format of information they need according to factors such as geographic location, age, literacy level and stage of the disease.

One of the chief investigators, EIRG researcher Dr Katrina Lister, and research fellow Ms Rosetta Massenburg have interviewed 42 women with breast cancer, in focus groups and individually, as part of a user-needs analysis for the portal.

The sample includes women in various age groups and with different stages of the disease, times since diagnosis, education and marital status, urban and rural locations, and ethnic backgrounds - all of whom have varying information needs.

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"One of the issues is that the resources themselves need to be oriented to the needs of the user," Dr Lister said. "One of the issues is that the resources themselves need to be user oriented. We have different users with different needs."
**PhD student Ms Tam Vuong is working with the team trialling the community liaison pharmacist project. Photo Greg Ford.**

**Trial to curb drugs confusion**

**PHARMACY**

As the focus on health care in Australia becomes acute, a new Monash University project is aiming to solve one of the system's most vexing problems.

A six-month trial in the Alfred and Austin hospitals is about to tackle "medication misadventure", potentially life-threatening result of a discharged patient's confusion over an altered medication regimen.

During hospitalisation, a patient's medication is often changed; doses are reduced or increased; new medication is prescribed and old medication stopped.

According to triall supervisor Dr Jennifer Marriott, a former clinical pharmacist at the Victorian College of Pharmacy, the problem is one of continuity.

"Patients often become confused following discharge from hospital," she said.

"They come home with a lot of information and sometimes get into trouble."

"They either take the wrong dose, start taking medication they were taking before they went into hospital or take a double dose of the old and new medication."

Under the trial funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services, a community liaison pharmacist (CLP) at each hospital will help ensure that patients at risk take the correct medication in the prescribed doses.

The CLP will form a bridge between the hospital and all the community services, including the patient's GP and their pharmacist, Dr Marriott says.

"The idea is to send the CLP to the patient's home in the first few days following their discharge from hospital to sort out any problems, and to ensure the patient has appropriate information."

"The CLP will also communicate with the community health practitioners so everybody knows what is meant to be happening with the patient's medication."

In the past, many patients who had just left hospital simply fell through the cracks in the system, Dr Marriott says.

"Many ended up in hospital again because they had not taken their medication as instructed," she said.

The CLP service is designed especially to benefit the elderly and chronically ill, but can help anyone who takes a lot of medication and is at risk of medication misadventure, Dr Marriott says.

"The project is being conducted not only to show that it is economically viable, but also to develop a model that could be considered the service implemented more widely throughout Victoria and the rest of Australia," Ms Vuong says.

Ms Vuong is investigating the issues associated with implementation of the CLP in her PhD project.

John Clark

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**Students give advice to death row inmates**

**CRIMINAL LAW**

A third-year Monash law student undertaking a three-month internship to Louisiana helped get a stay of execution for a man just 27 minutes before he was due to die.

Mr Nick Button was one of three law students who went to Louisiana earlier this year to help provide legal representation and assistance to inmates facing the death penalty.

He said it was not yet known whether the inmate would be granted a retrial or whether another execution would be ordered, but he said to have contributed to the stay of execution was "an amazing experience".

Mr Button, Ms Olivia Henderson and Ms Marissa Dreher undertook their internships at legal assistance centres in New Orleans under the ReprieveAustralia intern program, which provides legal assistance to impoverished death row prisoners in the US and the Caribbean.

Ms Henderson and Mr Button worked at the Louisiana Crisis Assistance Center on trial and direct appeal cases. Ms Dreher was based at the Capital Post Convictions Project of Louisiana, working with clients who had been convicted of a capital offence and had lost their direct appeal.

The students were involved in trial preparation, appeals cases and advocacy for prisoners who were facing or were already on death row.

Their work included interviewing witnesses and juries, visiting clients, records collection, court attendance and legal research.

Mr Button said that while witnessing the death penalty system was confronting, it had been an invaluable experience.

"It was a shock to see it at first glance, but it was very rewarding volunteering to help these people," he said.

Fifth-year law student Ms Henderson conducted research into grand jury discrimination and found that while juries were meant to represent a cross-section of the community, women, black people and former inmates were discriminated against.

She said if it was found that a juror had been discriminated against, a trial could be granted, buying more time for the defence.

Monash's Castan Centre for Human Rights Law signed on to assist Reprieve in recruiting student volunteers after a visit by Reprieve founder Mr Clive Stafford-Smith to the Law School in May last year.

The students received generous support from the Monash Law Dean's Travel Fund and the Monash Alumni program.

Fiona Perry and Diane Squires

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From left: Ms Olivia Henderson, Ms Marissa Dreher and Mr Nick Button spent three months providing legal assistance in the US.
Peace and security in the Middle East?

In 1947, the United Nations adopted a resolution on the creation of two states: Israel and Palestine. The decision was justified in terms of national self-determination, an emerging intellectual framework for international relations in the post-WWII period.

All subsequent efforts – wars and peace efforts – have taken for granted and reinforced the 'natural' relationship between national pride and the exercise of state sovereignty. The two wars are seen by the Israelis and the Palestinians as mutually dependent. Here lies the most intractable challenge to peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

How can the state of Israel, it is argued in Tel Aviv, be worthy of the name if it is unable to control its borders and protect the citizens? How can Israel allow the return of displaced Palestinian refugees if that would dramatically affect the demography of Israel, undermining the Jewish nature of its population and, as a consequence, the Jewishness of the state? How can the Israeli Right Wing argue that would be a Jewish state, or a Palestinian one. Instead, it would be multicultural and multifaith. It would be a genuine democratic state that confers equal rights and opportunity to its citizens (Jewish and Palestinian), perhaps with carefully elaborated authority for local governments to empower communities.

The idea of decoupling national pride and state sovereignty is not likely to be welcomed by many Israelis and Palestinians. But it may be the best chance for peace and security for both people and the region.

As the struggle between Israel and the Palestinians degenerates into an all-out war, the prospects for a lasting ceasefire seem bleak. But Middle East expert Dr Shahram Akbarzadeh says there is a way forward that would require new thinking to end an age-old problem.

The imperatives of national pride and self-determination have placed the two peoples on a collision course. The Gaza Strip, which effectively coincided with the 1967 borders, was the implicit goal of the 1993 Oslo Peace Accord. Some form of limited Palestinian self-rule was also the subject of negotiation between Israel and Egypt in 1979.

Yet the formation of a sovereign Palestinian state may not be the ideal solution for peace in the Middle East. Given the degree of mistrust and animosity between the two peoples, the two states of Israel and Palestine are very likely to engage in familiar security games that states play. As a sovereign entity, the hypothetical state of Palestine cannot be denied access to an armed force, complete with an air force and a navy. It cannot be denied security training, supported with its most immediate Arab neighbours. The nature of these arrangements could be purely defensive. But what if they are not? This is exactly what the Israeli leadership is afraid of. For years, the Israeli Right has argued that a Palestinian state would be a beachhead for an Arab onslaught to push the Jews into the sea. The idea may be bizarre, but it is enough to unsettle the Israelis and raise tensions. Whether this scenario would lead to another war is too hypothetical to contemplate now, but one thing is certain. The two states would be at loggerheads with each other and that cannot be good for regional security.

Other issues that are sure to remain troublesome include the status of Jerusalem and the question of repatriation for the Palestinian refugees. Jerusalem's symbolic and spiritual importance for both people is unquestionable, and its importance is repeatedly reiterated by leaders from both sides. Their argument is very simple: how can they truly call them their points of departure are diametrically opposed, the consequence is the lifestyles to empower communities.

The idea of decoupling national pride and state sovereignty is not likely to be welcomed by many Israelis and Palestinians. But it may be the best chance for peace and security for both people and the region.

Dr Shahram Akbarzadeh is a postdoctoral research fellow in the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash University. He is the co-author of Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan (Scarecrow, 2002) and co-editor of Multicultural Communities in Australia (UNSW Press, 2001).
Local art goes global in new exhibition

Artwork by Thai and Australian artists will be showcased in a new exhibition this month at the Monash University Museum of Art.

No Worries! Mai Pen Rai! brings together artists who work in either the Melbourne or Bangkok art scenes and whose art presents highly personal interpretations of the issues faced by local artists working in a globalised world.

The exhibition will include new work by Australian artists Kate Beynon, Jane Tregriffin and Daniel Von Sturmer as well as artworks by Sutee Kanavichayanont, Sakarin Krue-On and Michael Showanasai from Thailand.

Exhibition curators Mr Trevor Sawyer and Ms Sarah Tuton hope the collection will highlight similarities and differences between the two groups of artists, whose work deals with issues such as racism, sexual politics and the impact of western cultural symbols on local communities.

According to Ms Tuton, one of the main underlying differences is that Thai artists, unlike their Australian counterparts, are often influenced by a single-dominant culture.

"While the artists based in Australia come from a variety of backgrounds, a result of Australia's multi-cultural heritage, the Thai artists are working within a pervasive culture with strong traditional roots," she said.

"Though the Thai artists do not work exclusively using customary techniques, the artistic traditions of Thailand do inform the artist's work - by infusing either colour choice or subject matter."

Australian and Thai artists work side by side showing off their individual strengths and bringing about collaborations which have been mutually enriching.

The resulting exhibition represents an important chapter in the ongoing artistic and personal interpretations of the issues that are faced by artists who work in Australia and Thailand. The exhibition is supported by the Monash University Museum of Art's Asian Centre and is open from Monday 21 April until Friday 2 May.

Birthday concert for Australian composer

Monash University will host a musical celebration this month in honour of the 80th birthday of Australian composer and critic Felix Werder.

As part of the cultural opportunities, musicians George Dreyfus and Trevor Barnard will perform an upbeat version of Werder's compositions.

Werder was born in Berlin in 1922 but fled Nazi Germany in 1938. He came to Australia in 1940 with his father and came to be regarded as a leading force in Australian contemporary music.

His music was widely performed both in Australia and overseas, and in 1976 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for services to music.

The concert will be held on Thursday 11 April at 7.00 pm to 9.00 pm at Melbourne University's Museum of Art. Tickets are $15 for adults and $12 for concessions.

Diverse Australia on show

A picture of friendship and a diverse land: Davida Allen's engaging work 'Davida and Queyen', part of the We Are Australian exhibition.

Australians' artistic and cultural diversity will be showcased in the exhibition opening this month at the Switchback Gallery on Monash's Gippsland campus.

The exhibition includes artworks from 254 Australian artists who were invited to contribute work based on the theme 'We Are Australian'.

The resulting collection represents a cross-section of Australian culture reflecting the diverse backgrounds of the artists involved - including Italian, Greek, Indigenous Australian, Torres Strait Islander, Indonesian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Egyptian, English and American.

Originally opened to celebrate the 1999 Melbourne Festival, We Are Australians has since travelled to venues in both regional and metropolitan Australia and was used as a visual support for the Australian Government at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban last year.

According to Mr Julie Adams, head of Monash University's Gippsland Centre for Art and Design and coordinator of the Switchback Gallery, the show highlights the rich artistic heritage that artists working in multicultural Australia are able to draw on.

"The breadth of creativity and artistic skill on display in the exhibition is a great example of the vibrancy and energy of our multicultural society. It's something we can all be proud of," she said.

"We Are Australians, sponsored by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, has been brought to Monash University by the Gippsland Centre for Art and Design and the Latrobe Regional Gallery."

Where: We Are Australians When: Opens 7 pm, 24 April until 16 May Where: Switchback Gallery, Gippsland campus Who: For more information, contact the Latrobe Regional Gallery (tel +61 3 9922 6531) Derek Brown

Film festival gives an international perspective

According to Ms Law, the Monash event aimed to local audiences with the chance to see a wide variety of foreign films - something she believes is missing from the Melbourne film scene.

"There is not enough variety in the films shown in Melbourne, and foreign films are often not very well exposed," she said.

"When I was working in Hong Kong there were a lot of foreign films in the cinema, and when I came to Melbourne I thought there would be even more variety. Unfortunately, American films occupy most of the film market here."

Mr Ian Rae, marketing and events manager of Monash University Performing Arts, said this was the first time Monash had hosted films from the Melbourne International Film Festival.

"We Are Australian" Art Exhibition

The CLOC Music Theatre will turn up the heat at the Alexander Centre on Monash's Clayton campus this month with Hot Mikado, a modern interpretation of a Gilbert and Sullivan classic.

Hot Mikado combines vibrant costumes and dynamic and upbeat songs to create an entertaining new slant on the classic tale of love and loss set in a fictional 'bitter-sweet' kingdom in Japan.

Since its initial run in 1885, The Mikado has been performed more than any other Gilbert and Sullivan work, and in recent years, Hot Mikado has had its own share of rave reviews.

The CLOC Music Theatre season of Hot Mikado will play from 10 to 25 April. For bookings and further information, contact +61 3 9592 2897.

Let's get physical

A night at the theatre will get worlds physical when the Melbourne circus-theatre company Dislocate takes to the stage this month at the Alexander Theatre on Monash's Clayton campus.

Dislocate's Hot Mikado, a Gilbert and Sullivan based on the classic tale of love and loss set in a fictional 'bitter-sweet' kingdom in Japan. Since its initial run in 1885, The Mikado has been performed more than...
A history of Yallourn

Yallourn was a town built for a mining community but was eventually swallowed by the very industry it supported. It's a beautifully written history about Yallourn, designed in the 1920s as a picturesque town of gardens laid out on hygienic and aesthetic principles. It became a thriving and close-knit community and was home to several generations of State Electricity Commission workers and their families.

By the 1960s, however, the town was surplus to requirements — it had become an area "to be cleared", because it was found to be sitting on good coal.

The Savoy Yallourn Campaign was long and bitterly fought, but the residents' efforts were in vain.

Local historian Dr Fletcher brings to life a community that still exists vividly in memory and imagination. She also touches on the intense grief that people feel for lost places and at the creativity that grief can release.

Digging People Up for Coal is the first book to investigate the process of deconstruction, demolition and displacement of an Australian town.


Monash historian Dr Meredith Fletcher writes about the loss of a town the people who were displaced in the quest for coal.

Monash historian Dr Meredith Fletcher writes about the loss of a town and the people who were displaced in the quest for coal.

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The Boyds: A Family Biography

By Brenda Niall

Published by Melbourne University Press

RRP: $55.95

The re-abuse of children and the safety of the child protection workers who are sent to look after them are examined in this first collaborative work of Stanley and Goddard.

The book proposes that by recognising the violence faced by protective workers, protection of children under the care of protective services will be increased.

Parallels are drawn between the transnational protection worker and the transnational re-abused child. The book looks at case studies, the deaths of innocent children and the failure of the child protection service.

Associate Professor Chris Goddard is the head of social work at Monash University and the author of many books on child welfare. His research into maltreatment and family violence and has been published in leading international and Australian journals.

Singapore 1942: Britain's Greatest Defeat

By Alan Warren

Published by Hambledon and London

RRP: $49.95

The surrender of Singapore on 15 February 1942 was the greatest and most humiliating defeat in British history. It was also the greatest defeat of the Second World War.

Based on new information that emerged in the 1990s, Singapore 1942 is a comprehensive account of the defeat in Malaya which sealed Singapore's fate. The weakness of the British Navy and a failure to take the Japanese seriously led to a string of defeats and, inevitably, the capture of more than 120,000 men, changing Britain's imperial destiny and the course of the Second World War.

Author Alan Warren, a lecturer in history at Monash University, published the book to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the defeat. Warren is also the author of Washington, the Papacy and the Indian Army.

If you are a member of the Monash community and have a forthcoming book, contact monashnews@adm.monash.edu.au

Inprint: A Family Biography

By Brenda Niall

Published by Melbourne University Press

RRP: $55.95

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Beard today, gone tomorrow

Monash University library attendant Mr Tony Lorento has shaved his beard for the first time in 33 years - all in the name of charity.

Mr Lorento agreed to the shave on 14 March by his colleague of 16 years Ms Lavena Bligh after more than $400 was raised for The World’s Greatest Shave for a Cure for Leukemia charity.

On the same day, Monash library attendant Mr Duncan Wingrove had his head shaved after more than $100 was donated as an incentive to have him drop his locks.

Spanning the educational divide

From left: Baxter Primary School student Sean Wilson, Monash student Adelene Poh and Sam Scobie, Mary school students has drawn on are prepared to provide repair materi­ Facilitated Learning for IT Education the talents of a group of secondary

The educational game follows the to use their theoretical skills to become future IT professionals," she adventures of a ... rocket develop the program into a working 
said. 
According to Mount Erin mathe­
matics teacher Ms Kylie Dwyer, the

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