Smoking link to kidney disease

A Monash University study has found that smoking can cause kidney damage in people who are otherwise considered healthy and not at risk of kidney disease.

The study, by researchers in Monash’s Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine and the Monash Medical Centre, assessed kidney damage in 4500 Australian adults who did not have high blood pressure or diabetes — two of the most common causes of kidney failure.

The researchers found that among people with normal blood sugar levels and blood pressure, smoking made men, but not women, three times more likely to show reduced kidney function.

The study also showed that both male and female smokers with blood sugar and blood pressure levels at the high end of normal were more likely to have high protein levels in their urine, a sign of kidney damage.

Dr Esther Briganti, a senior lecturer in the department, said the study did not examine why male smokers were more likely to have reduced kidney function than female smokers.

She said it also showed that the higher a person smoked, the higher their degree of kidney damage.

"Until now there was information indicating that smoking was bad if you already had kidney disease," she said.

But this is the first study to show that if you are healthy, you are at risk of having indicators of kidney damage that may progress to kidney failure if you smoke.

Kidney damage was gauged by measuring glomerular filtration rate and proteinuria (leakage of protein into the urine).

"If you're looking protein from your kidneys, it's a sign that there's kidney damage and an indicator of future kidney failure," Dr Briganti said.

"One of the problems with kidney disease is that you have to lose a lot of kidney function before you start feeling sick. Once the disease has progressed that far, the risk of kidney failure is markedly increased, and treatment with dialysis or a kidney transplant may become necessary.

"It's important that the general public is warned that smoking is associated with kidney damage, in addition to its other known health consequences."

Dr Briganti said that smoking might cause kidney damage by increasing blood pressure within the kidney by boosting the release of the hormones noradrenaline and vasopressin. It might also cause damage by impairing the regulation of blood flow through the kidney's blood vessels and interfering with endothelial function.

The study has been published in the American Journal of Kidney Disease.

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Candy highlights: aspiring gastroenterologist Ms Geraldine Buckingham gets back to work after being named the Victorian Rhodes Scholar.

Ph: Peter Anikijenko

Medical student named Rhodes scholar

AWARD

Since Monash University medical student Ms Geraldine Buckingham heard the news, she has been unable to stop smiling.

The 23-year-old has been celebrating the highlight of her short career — last month she was named the 2003 Victorian Rhodes Scholar.

"It's a tremendous opportunity to broaden my horizons," she said.

At Oxford, Ms Buckingham will study for her masters of philosophy in comparative social policy with the option of staying on another year to undertake a PhD.

The aspiring gastroenterologist said she not only wanted to provide one-on-one patient care, she also wanted to tackle the various challenges of the health system itself.

"I'll like to do something that will go some way towards making the world a better place," she said.

"I want to establish health systems that can give people greater access to healthcare. To do this, we need to look at economic policies and the social impact behind public policies to ensure high-quality systems are available to people as a reasonable cost."

Ms Buckingham is hoping to defer the scholarship to 2004 to enable her to complete her internship next year.

"It's an awesome responsibility to be considered worthy of being in that group of people. It's unbelievable and quite daunting."

The Rhodes scholarship was established after the death of British colonialist Cecil Rhodes in 1902. Monash student Mr Nathan Grills was named as last year's Rhodes Scholar.

Past scholars include former Prime Minister Mr Bob Hawke and former leader of the Australian Labor Party Mr Kim Beazley.

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Ruth Ward
**Change of Preference Sessions**

Monash University's Change of Preference Guide has been sent to all schools as well as those Year 12 students who are on the VCE magazine mailing list.

Monash is also giving students the chance to speak to faculty representatives once they have received their ENTERs. The Change of Preference Sessions will be held as follows:

- **Gippsland region** - Tuesday 17 December, 3 pm to 6 pm, Faculty of Business and Economics, conference room, building SN.
- **Gippsland campus** - Metropolitan region - Wednesday 18 December, 10 am to 2 pm, South one lecture theatre, building 64, Clayton campus.

The Change of Preference period for current Victorian VCE students runs from 7 am on 16 December to 5 pm on 22 December.

Monash University will be closing for the holiday period on Friday 20 December. Prospective students should direct any late-minute application and admissions inquiries to university staff before noon on that day. The university reopens on 2 January 2003.

**Orientation week**

The official commencement date for first-year students is the beginning of Orientation week, 24 February 2003. This is in accordance with the transition policy approved by Monash University Academic Board.

The aim is to provide first-year students with the chance to benefit from the range of academic orientation programs on offer and to encourage them to engage in social interaction with staff and other new students. For more information, go to the Monash Orientation Program website at www.admit.monash.edu.au/transition.

International students are encouraged to enrol during the last week of February 2003. For more information on Monash International enrolments, contact MS Advertising on ph: +61 3 9905 8540 or email tames.learning@monash.monash.edu.au.

**BUSINESS ETHICS**

Jail colluders, says Fels

Criminal sanctions should be imposed to help stamp out "hardcore collusion" by big business, Professor Allan Fels said at the Monash Governance Research Unit seminar held at Parliament House last month.

Professor Fels, the chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and an honorary professor at Monash's Faculty of Business and Economics, said hardcore collusion, including secret price-fixing agreements, lay rigging and market sharing, was extremely harmful to both business customers and consumers.

Gains by colluders were large and difficult to detect, he said, and incentives for collusion were high in some areas of the economy. The current penalty system, based on the imposition of fines, was not a sufficient deterrent to prevent hard-core collusion by big business.

"We believe that hardcore collusion is critically antisocial, a form of theft and little different from classes of corporate crime that already attract criminal sanctions," Professor Fels said.

"We should join the United States, Canada, Japan, Korea, Britain and other parts of the world in having criminal sanctions for collusion."

Professor Fels said it was likely the ACCC would seek to introduce criminal sanctions for collusion as the result of a review of the competition provisions of the Trade Practices Act currently being undertaken by the commission.

He acknowledged the work of the Monash Governance Research Unit in making an important and reasoned contribution to the life of the nation.

The Monash Governance Research Unit seminars are monthly seminars with guest seminars, held at Parliament House last month.

**In Brief**

**Scholarship in student’s memory**

A scholarship celebrating the life of Monash graduate Andrea Logan, who died in 1999, will help support a student researching hypoglycaemia.

The ongoing scholarship of $20,000 per year will help with the living expenses of a PhD student in the medical faculty’s Nutrition and Dietetics Unit.

Ms Logan’s (nee Wilson) gained a Bachelor of Science degree at Monash in the 1980s. In her first year, she was named as one of the top 20 students in the course. She later became a teacher of mathematics and Indonesian at Wesley College.

In 1999, her parents, Yvonne and Geoff Wilson, set up the A. J. Logan Trust Fund to raise $200,000 to support a PhD student doing research into hypoglycaemia not related to diabetes.

**Obesity studies rewarded**

A Monash postdoctoral student researching the genetic factor that causes obesity has been awarded one of five industry fellowships by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

Dr Amanda Edge, from the Department of Physiology was the only Victorian researcher to receive a fellowship.

The fellowships, intended for researchers who wish to spend two years working in industry and two years in a research institution, aim to foster closer interactions between Australian researchers and industries.

**World issues and young people**

More than 30 Australian academics gathered at the Gippsland campus recently to explore how world events affect young people.

Associate Professor Lindsay Finlayson from the Education Faculty at Gippsland said the conference was an attempt to discuss the role education played in helping young people deal with events such as September 11.

He said people were identifying with events that happened 10,000 miles away as if they had happened on their doorstep. "What struck me about September 11 was that immediately after, there was no other conversation - it consumed everybody and people were unable to go about their normal lives," he said.

Dr Finlayson said education and teaching were vital tools in helping young people make sense of such an event.

**Law studies in Italy**

Monash law students have the opportunity to study at Bologna University in Italy next year.

International law is a new, commercially focused course being offered by the School of Business at Monash and York (Osgoode Hall) universities.

Although it is a stand-alone program, students can combine the course with the Monash University’s Perugia Centre in Italy.
New insight into our harsh climate

Meteorology

Indigenous people's understandings of weather patterns are being recorded as "This sort of information is critical day."

Dr. Lynette Russell, director of Monash's Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies (CAIS), and Professor Nigel Tapper from the School of Geography and Environmental Science recently appointed PhD student Greg Lehman to work in the project. Among others, the Bureau of Meteorology approached Monash to develop an Indigenous Weather Linkage Grant and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities, has been developed into weather calendars developed over thousands of years by Indigenous

A small study program was established, and the material gathered during the process, including seasonal weather patterns and long-term environmental changes.

"We were on the Tiwi Islands looking at tropical thunderstorms, and one of the locals said 'we know when we are going to have a big thunderstorm because it coincides with high tide in the middle of the day'.

"After we did an initial analysis and looked at the data through scientists' eyes, we found evidence that there were indeed links between tide and thunderstorm activity because the sea level rises in a (low) Indigenous Australian's long-sustained relationship with, and understanding of, the land.

"This sort of information is critical to resolving some of the issues on land rights. If we don't understand the relationship between the land and Indigenous people, how are we going to resolve these issues?" he said.

Professor Tapper became interested in Indigenous weather knowledge about five years ago while researching atmospheric phenomena on the Tiwi Islands, north of Darwin.

"It seemed the locals knew a lot more about what was going on than we were giving them credit for, he said.

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Heroes honoured after tragic incident

Monash continued to expand its international activities with the launch of the Centre for Monash University in London in August. Monash deputy chancellor Dr Jane Hean officially opened the centre in a ceremony held at Australia House.

Australian high commissioner to the UK Mr Michael I.'Estrange, centre director Professor Merran Evans, Monash deputy vice-chancellor (Academic and Planning) Professor Alan Lindsay, Monash Law dean Professor Stephen Parker and King's College principal Professor Arthur Lussie also attended the ceremony.

Monash showcased its expertise in the sciences, sport and international education during a week-long series of seminars and events marking the opening of the centre.

The centre will develop links with government, educational and cultural institutions and industry in the UK and Europe.

Council's goal is excellence in research

Plans to establish Monash University as a premier sporting organisation were announced this year as part of a drive to elevate the university's involvement in all things sport.

In June, the University Council passed a comprehensive report that features the role of sport within the university's defining themes of innovation, engagement and internationalisation.

The university has links with professional sports organisations linked to the Australian Football League, the National Basketball League and the Australian Institute of Sport.

Alas in June, former Australian Olympic swimming coach Mr Vince Swann, head of the Department of Economics and Business Sustainability, Dr Brett Inker as well as students and mascot launchee Mr Alexander Brown were labelled heroes after helping to subdue the alleged gunman.

Last week the trio, as well as other staff and students who showed bravery during the tragic incident, were awarded special teaching awards for their actions.

Dr Gordon-Brown and Mr Boast were presented Australian Awards for University Teaching by the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, at a function at Parliament House.

The pair also accepted awards on behalf of Dr Inker, Mr Andrew Swann, Mr Colin Thurlow and Mr Bradley Thompson.

A tragic shooting incident at Monash's Clayton campus in October shocked the university community. William Wu and Mr Steven Chan, were killed and four students and two lecturers were injured during the incident in the Menzies building.

Dr Gordon-Brown and deputy head of the Department of Mathematics and Business Statistics, Dr Brett Inker, were praised at the week-long series of events marking the opening of the centre.

The centre will develop links with government, educational and cultural institutions and industry in the UK and Europe.

A year of ups and downs for Monash in 2002 with a new vice-chancellor, a tragic shooting incident and ongoing groundbreaking research. Diane Squires looks back at the year that was.

New centre launched in London

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Council's goal is excellence in research

In sympathy: Staff and students laid tributes, pictured left, at the Menzies building in memory of the two students who died, while, pictured right, the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, centre, this month presented assistant lecturer Mr Alastair Boast, left, and lecturer Dr Lee Gordon-Brown, New Australian Awards for University Teaching for their bravery during a tragic shooting incident at Monash.

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New VC names teaching, research as priorities

Professor Peter Darvall was appointed vice-chancellor of Monash, in July, in his 32nd year of academic life at the university. Darvall worked his way through the positions of dean of engineering and deputy vice-chancellor (Research and Development), to the top job. He said that “quality of teaching and research would be the priorities in his new role.”

“Every day we make research through important stages in their professional and personal development under our guardians,” he said after his appointment. “We can be enormously proud of what has been achieved in just 40 years and confidence in moving forward to reach our ambitions goals within Australia and beyond.”

Earlier that month, the former vice-chancellor, Professor David Hall, reached a mutual agreement with the chancellor, Mr Jerry Ellis, to stand down following allegations of plagiarism during his career as a researcher in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s. Ms Ellis said that while the incident had been damaging, the outcome had demonstrated the university’s commitment to upholding the highest ethical standards in all it does. Professor Gary Buxton was appointed acting deputy vice-chancellor (Research and Development). Professor Buxton has been at Monash for 24 years and was more recently associate dean (Research) in the Faculty of Arts.

Centre highlights focus on science

Monash University reinforced its commitment as science in 2002 with the launch of its new science centre, the formation of a biochemistry cluster and the announcement that it would lead the National Stem Cell Centre.

The projects were just three of a number of major announcements made at the university throughout the year.

In May, Monash partnered with The Alfred, the Baker Heart Research Institute and the Macfarlane Burnett Institute for Medical Research and Public Health to form one of the largest and most advanced medical research facilities in Australia – the Alfred-Medical Research and Education Precinct.

The $93 million complex will offer state-of-the-art equipment and provide the Monash Medical School with at least three new floors of laboratories, offices, seminar rooms and shared facilities.

And in July, a $42 million science centre opened at primary and secondary school-aged children was officially opened at Monash University’s Clayton campus.

The centre, developed over 10 years, was designed to involve the children in science by tapping into their curiosity. Visitors can interact with working scientists and gain hands-on science experience.

In another science initiative in July, Victorian Innovation Minister Mr John Brumby launched the first of five planned stages of construction for seven buildings in the new Monash Science Technology, Research and Innovation Precinct (STRIP).

The $300 million STRIP, expected to become an epicentre for research and development, is designed to support innovation by merging business and industry with first-rate research which has commercial potential.

Drug discovery and development company Bora Holdings made an important agreement to be among the first tenants in the precinct.

The centre, to be housed in the STRIP, will bring together research groups across the fields of bio-medicine, biotechnology, IVF technology, genomics, biophotonics and nanotechnology.

In October, Mr Brumby and Monash vice-chancellor Professor Peter Darvall launched the university’s Clayton campus as the site of Australia’s first synthetic biology centre.

Preparation work has begun at the site at the corner of Blackburn and Wellington roads, with major construction expected to begin early next year.

In October, a research cluster was formed at the university to accommodate growth in bio-technology research and development in Australia.

The Monash Research Cluster for Biomedicine, based at the Clayton campus, comprises facilities and researchers from Monash’s School of Biomedical Sciences.

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George Eliot
by Pauline Nestor
Published by Palgrave
RRP: $55

George Eliot was one of the great thinkers of her time, a figure central to the main schools of thought and beliefs of the 19th century. In this new study of her life, Associate Professor Pauline Nestor offers a challenging reassessment of Eliot's contribution to critical debates of her age and our own era.

In particular, Dr Nestor examines the author’s literary exploration of ethics. She argues that Eliot's novels can be seen as relevant to contemporary theoretical debates in feminism, moral philosophy, postcolonial studies and psychoanalysis. Covering the writer's complete body of fiction, most important and influential novelists of the 19th century.

Eliot's most original work is a quest for ideas and ideals that she believes are needed to lead us towards human progress. Her work is a fascinating exploration of the ways that we find ourselves engaging with the world and the ethical challenges that we face as a result.

'What Counts as Mathematics?
Technologies of Power in Adult Vocational Education'
by Simon Cooper
Published by Routledge
RRP: $192

In this book, the historical, sociological and practical elements of mathematics within vocational education are discussed against the emerging impact of technology. Differences between educational institutions and the workplace are raised as sources of tension as well as offering new possibilities for vocational mathematics education.

The author draws on an extensive literature base, as well as two decades of practical teaching experience, to critique the impact of recent federal government policies on mathematics education. This book is suitable for mathematics and vocational educators, researchers and research students.

POSTSCRIPT

The judicial interpretation of statutes and the constitution is one of the most controversial areas of law in Australia. In this new book, Legal Interpretation in Democratic Society, original essays have been brought together to look at the prospect of finding a workable separation of powers that sates the rule of law to our political power without undermining the democratic ideal. Published by Ashgate, the text is edited by Jeffrey Goldsworthy, a professor of law at Monash University, and Dr Tom Campbell, a professional fellow from Charles Sturt University.

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

BOOKS/ARTS

Student talent on show

Futuristic car designs and large-scale sculptures are just some of the works created by final-year students from Monash University's Faculty of Art and Design on show this month in two exhibitions at the Caulfield and Gippsland campuses.

At Gippsland, 16 students completing their Bachelor of Visual Arts are displaying their work in an exhibition at the Switchback Gallery until January 31.

Gallery manager and head of the Gippsland Centre for Art and Design Mr Julie Adams said the exhibition included a diverse selection of work, from paintings, sculptures and photographs to digital prints and video.

Mr Adams said the variety of pieces on show reflected the different personal and global concerns of the exhibiting students.

'Each student is reacting to the time in which we live. There is work that responds to, and questions, environmental issues, the plight of refugees, and the effects of technology and scientific research on our lives,' she said.

"Other students have been prompted by issues of identity and the very things that we find ourselves acting out, or notions concerning the familiar line of "嗄t home and away.""

At the Caulfield campus, graduating third-year and fourth-year honours students in Industrial Design and graduates from the Bachelor of Industrial Design/Bachelor of Engineering double degree are exhibiting a wide range of work that includes designs for furniture, automotive, consumer and computer products.

Mr Simon Cooper, an editor of Arena Journal and a lecturer in the Department of Mass Communications and Writing, in the School of Humanities, Communications and Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts, at Monash University.

take a seat: industrial design student Mr Oden Mentzakoum with his state-of-the-art chair design, which is on display at the Caulfield gallery.

Student sculpture rewarded

Art and design student Mr Roh Singh has won the $7000 Pinneau Prize for industrial design for his wall piece titled 'Art: Scene 2', depicting his grandmother walking in Fliinders Street Station in the 1930s. Mr Singh, 22, was one of 26 artists shortlisted from 190 entrants from around Australia for the annual prize.

Gippsland book short-listed

A Monash University academic was one of three authors whose work was short-listed for this year's Community and Regional History Prize of the 2002 New South Wales Premier's History Awards.

Donor of the Centre for Gippsland Studies Ms Meredith Young of Industrial Design/Bachelor of Engineering double degree are exhibiting a wide range of work that includes designs for furniture, automotive, consumer and computer products.

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The cultural ideal of fatherhood has changed dramatically through the 20th century. In the 1950s, the model father was a breadwinner, mentor and disciplinarian. Emotional involvement with the children was not important – rather, what a man could provide materially was the best measure of being a ‘good dad’. This ideal of fatherhood was reinforced by the ubiquity of single-verse families and glorified in wholesome television shows like Leave it to Beaver.

Social theorists argued that a stable family could only be achieved through ‘instrumental’ male leadership in the family home. To be sure, not everyone was happy with this image. Perhaps fearing that the 1950s man might choose to be househusband, images of the ‘new father’ are everywhere. This is not unusual. Social research consistently demonstrates that in most families it is women who continue to take the leading role in the provision and organisation of domestic labour and child care. Men might be performing increasingly more equally between men and women, students in my sociology-of-family-and-masculinity class say that the existence of househusbands is still under the influence of double standards and that even when a father is taking time off work to be the primary caregiver, he is often seen as not fully participating in the process. This is a common experience. The epitome of the ‘new father’ today is the stay-at-home dad. He is the bloke who takes sabbaticals from work to be the primary caregiver. He changes nappies, prepares formula, takes the overactive child and looks after the kids for a while. A number of students even know a househusband.

The importance of men taking an active and emotionally engaged role in their children's lives is reinforced by academics, health professionals and pop-psychologists. As a recent study of caring for the elderly, I have witnessed that men who care for their elderly parents often report feelings of sadness, boredom and depression. They tell of the anxieties of a career on hold, the difficulties in completing a task without distraction and the sadness of watching the Wiggles. Of course, this is not news to women who stay at home and look after children – many report exactly the same feelings.

While more fathers seem to be staying at home with the children, Dr Andrew Singleton warns we should not be celebrating equity in the home just yet.

The thing about househusbands

While more fathers seem to be staying at home with the children, Dr Andrew Singleton warns we should not be celebrating equity in the home just yet. But despite the widespread optimism, very few men are actually choosing to be househusbands. Those who do are generally not choosing to stay at home in the first instance because of a broader commitment to gender equity. Rather, the existence of househusbands highlights the complexities and contradictions of having children in contemporary society. Financial imperatives, career paths and discipline are all factors that come into play.

In many cases, the female partner earns a higher salary, so the couple will make a pragmatic decision that he stays home for the sake of the mortgage. Sometimes, the man is unemployed or made redundant, so it makes sense that he stays at home and looks after the kids for a while. The death of a spouse or a ruling in the family court may also be a factor.

Other couples actively negotiate a domestic arrangement that will enable both parents to spend time at home with the children while also allowing professional contact with the outside world – both workers and househusbands in any given week.

But evidence indicates that househusbands do not always have an easy time. Amid the joys of a child learning to walk or saying a few words, many househusbands report feelings of isolation, boredom and depression. They tell of the anxieties of a career on hold, the difficulties in completing a task without distraction and the sadness of watching the Wiggles. Of course, this is not news to women who stay at home and look after children – many report exactly the same feelings.

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While more fathers seem to be staying at home with the children, Dr Andrew Singleton warns we should not be celebrating equity in the home just yet. But despite the widespread optimism, very few men are actually choosing to be househusbands. Those who do are generally not choosing to stay at home in the first instance because of a broader commitment to gender equity. Rather, the existence of househusbands highlights the complexities and contradictions of having children in contemporary society. Financial imperatives, career paths and discipline are all factors that come into play.

In many cases, the female partner earns a higher salary, so the couple will make a pragmatic decision that he stays home for the sake of the mortgage. Sometimes, the man is unemployed or made redundant, so it makes sense that he stays at home and looks after the kids for a while. The death of a spouse or a ruling in the family court may also be a factor.

Other couples actively negotiate a domestic arrangement that will enable both parents to spend time at home with the children while also allowing professional contact with the outside world – both workers and househusbands in any given week.

But evidence indicates that househusbands do not always have an easy time. Amid the joys of a child learning to walk or saying a few words, many househusbands report feelings of isolation, boredom and depression. They tell of the anxieties of a career on hold, the difficulties in completing a task without distraction and the sadness of watching the Wiggles. Of course, this is not news to women who stay at home and look after children – many report exactly the same feelings.

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Cool runnings, Monash style: Monash law students Mr Kris Hendrata (in the sled), Mr Christopher Schaef (rear), and Mr Peter Thomas, pictured training at Melbourne’s Docklands, have left Australia to compete in the European Bobsleigh Championships. The trio will undertake extra training in Austria before competing in Germany and France. Their aim is to compete in the World Bobsleigh Championships next year, prior to the Winter Olympics in Milan in 2006.

Business has firm grip on knowledge

A Monash University study has placed Australian companies ahead of their European counterparts when it comes to implementing knowledge management strategies in the financial services sector.

Associate Professor Padia Burstein, from the School of Information and Management Sciences, said about 92 per cent of the 130 companies surveyed had in place or were planning specific programs to acquire and exploit organisational knowledge. “It certainly showed there is a good understanding of the need for knowledge management practice in Australia today,” Prof Burstein said.

In comparison, only 41 per cent of European financial institutions said they had set up such programs, with about 50 per cent examining the need for strategic knowledge management including the full range of processes by which an organisation deploys knowledge and can involve the acquisition, retention, storage, distribution and use of knowledge.

Professor Burstein said the results of the study confirmed that in Australia, knowledge management had an established place in management processes.

“IT is certainly shown there is a good understanding of the need for knowledge management practice in Australia today.”

The study, undertaken by researchers within the Faculty of Information Technology, is thought to be Australia’s first comprehensive look at knowledge management in the financial services sector.

The research was commissioned by FujiXerox Australia and compared with the results of a similar European study also sponsored by the company.

Monash researchers are undertaking a second project to look at knowledge management practices in law and accounting firms and professional and consulting services. The project should be completed by February.

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Published monthly by the Media Communications Unit of Marketing and Public Affairs, Monash University.
Editorial team/media inquiries: Fiona Perry +61 3 9905 2033
Diane Squires +61 3 9905 2057
For ad info +61 3 9905 2087
or email monashnews@adm.monash.edu.au

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