Monash triumph in fertility research

A Monash team indisputably took the world lead this year in in-vitro fertilisation programs. A total of 13 "test tube" babies have been born in the world, 11 in Melbourne. Ten - including the world's first and only twins - have involved the Monash team.

Headingleading the team is Professor Carl Wood, professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Also involved have been clinicians from the Queen Victoria Medical Centre and St. Andrew's Hospital. The 1981 test tube baby boom is the result of research which began 10 years ago as a project involving the Queen Victoria Medical Centre and the Royal Women's Hospital. The two teams separated after the birth in June 1980 of Australia's first in-vitro baby, Candice Reed, and they now work independently.

The latest report from Queen Vic. is that nearly 40 more women are pregnant as a result of the method which involves fertilisation of the mother's egg outside the womb. The IVF unit at the Hospital is now recording a 20 per cent success rate in pregnancies which is up eight per cent on earlier this year.

These are the Australian successes:

1980
June 23. Candice Reed (Royal Women's Hospital)
July 23. Pippin Jaime (QVMC)
1981
March 10. Victoria (St. Andrew's)
March 28. Carla Pelosi (Queen Victoria Medical Centre)
May 20. Unnamed girl (QVMC)
June 4. Twins Stephen and Amanda (QVMC)
June 20. Flarna (QVMC)
July 4. Unnamed boy (QVMC)
July 3. David (Royal Women's Hospital)
July 15. Alison Nerni Arnautasckas (QVMC)
July 23. Pippin Jaime Brennan (QVMC)

Hundreds of delegates late last month attended the Eighth Asian and Oceania Congress of Obstetrics and Gynaecology held in Melbourne with its main attraction being research here in the field of human infertility.

One of the projects being carried out by Monash researchers at QVMC which has aroused international interest is the development of techniques for freezing and preservation of human embryos.

The work, which has been approved by the hospital's ethics committee, is aimed at increasing the success rate in the in vitro fertilisation process.

It is being done by Dr Alan Trounson, a lecturer in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and Mrs Linda Mohr, a research assistant.

Dr Tounson says the freezing techniques are being developed to give the

Monash Reporter

Special graduates' issue

As has happened previously, this last issue of the Monash Graduate Reporter for the year is being mailed to all Monash graduates in a bid to keep them informed of University activities. Unlike other items in your mail box, we can't offer you the key to a fortune or even a Bingo game. But in a 'wrap-around' to the news pages we do offer a 1981 'slice of life'. Material used is from Information Office publications.

It's been 20 good years

Monash University celebrated its 20th birthday early this year.

It was on Saturday, March 11, 1961 that the then Premier of Victoria, Henry Bolte, officially opened the University in a ceremony before 2000 guests in the courtyard before the first students entered the University in 1961.

The University has been a key player in the economic and social development of Melbourne and Victoria. It has been a centre of learning, a hub of research and a place where students from all over the world come to study.

Monash University has a world-class reputation for excellence in teaching and research. It is home to several of Australia's top researchers and has been ranked in the top 100 universities in the world.

Monash has a strong commitment to community engagement and works closely with local government, businesses and non-government organisations to address some of the most pressing challenges facing society.

Monash University has a strong commitment to inclusivity and diversity. It has a strong emphasis on equity and access and works hard to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to succeed.
Eucalyptus

Aboriginal man may have been responsible, at least in part, for the proliferation of eucalypt forests which dominate the Australian landscape today.

Analysis of pollen samples from the Atherton Tableland in north Queensland by Dr A. Peter Kershaw, head of the University's Geography department, shows a dramatic change in the Australian landscape over the past 120,000 years.

Much of the change appears to be due to variations in climate, but the dominance of sclerophyll vegetation, indicated by the high values of pollen and Eucalyptus pollen in the pollen record, begins about 38,000 years ago. By then, it is believed, the Aborigines had arrived in Australia.

The emergence of the sclerophyll - particularly the fire-tolerant Eucalyptus - in the dominant vegetation coincides with a decrease in rainfall and a massive increase in charcoal particles - an indication of the increased prevalence of fire.

Dr Kershaw believes that the "sharp increase in the charcoal curve", which has been maintained to the present day, indicates that the increase in fires at this time was due largely to the activities of man - the use of fire by Aborigines for hunting and easier travel.

Advisory role

Ms Kuhse explains the basis of the Centre's work: "What we are aiming to do is promote the study of ethical issues raised by advances in the biomedical sciences. We also hope to become a resource and advisory centre for various groups and we hope to reach some conclusions on selected topics - conclusions that are defensible on ethical and rational grounds.

While we cannot hope to find all the answers we will at least be able to act as a catalyst in raising lots of questions. After all, how can we hope to find answers if we don't know the questions?"

A stake in future debate

Monash graduates and other members of the public can have a stake in the long-term success of the Centre for Human Bioethics and the opportunity to become involved in its activities.

The Centre's establishment was funded by the University but its continued existence and growth will depend on its ability to attract private funds.

Already its success has attracted support from the Myer Foundation, and donations from organisations and individuals have been welcomed. But at a grass roots level the Centre is building an Association of Friends - scholars and citizens both inside and outside the University - to underwrite its existence.

Resources such as bibliographies, reports will be made available to them as will the Centre's Newsletter, issue one of which appeared last month.

For further information on associationhip and also on the November 12 conference - to be held at Manumix College - contact Ms Helga Kuhse in the Centre, ext. 3206.
The country doctor may lack the glamour of his urban counterpart. But, in his widespread practice, he may be called upon to perform the most intimate personal and medical services. The country doctor's car may be the "ambulance" in an emergency. His car boot and black bag will contain all the vital resuscitation equipment available.

Unlike his city colleague, who has specialised hospital facilities and mobile coronary care units at call, he cannot "fob off" a patient in an emergency call. More often than not he is the only doctor in the district, on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in many cases, 52 weeks a year.

The work of a country doctor is described in meticulous detail in the recently published monograph "The Anatomy of a Rural Practice." By Dr John Murtagh, senior lecturer in the Monash Department of Community Practice, which was awarded the 1980 Francis Hardy Faulding Memorial Fellowship Prize for research in general practice.

The prize, worth $2,500, was presented to Dr Murtagh late last year at the annual meeting of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in Adelaide. The research that earned Dr Murtagh the award was undertaken from 1970 to 1979, when he was in joint practice with his father, Dr John J. Murtagh, in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Their practice, which included full-time work in a mobile medical service, extended over an area of almost 2,000 square kilometres of bushland, farmland and mountains.

Dr Murtagh's nine-year study, which set out to provide "an academic basis of knowledge for the future vocational education of rural general practitioners," analyses the country doctor's workload and investigates rural morbidity and mortality patterns. But the main thrust of the study is his analysis of emergency calls, which highlights the need for improved training in this area for future rural doctors.

- Disabled make needs known

Educational problems of disabled people — at Monash and more generally — came under discussion in a number of forums held at the University as part of Interactions, an annual series of events sponsoring dialogue on interactions of disabled persons activities.

The message of what disabled students seek and how they will achieve it was made clear at a symposium organised by the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities. Its report, Equality and Full Participation, will come about by disabled people making known their needs and representing themselves when their welfare is being decided.

At a Hash such an avenue for participation has existed since 1977 when Professor Ray Martin set up his advisory committee. Many improvements have resulted but it has also been acknowledged that major deficiencies remain in the lack of links in the older two level buildings.

Two Monash students have taken the initiative to provide representation at a national level for both secondary and tertiary students who are disabled by establishing an Australian Disabled Students Union. Steven Hendy, an Arts/Law student, is foundation president of the Union and Glen Patmore, an Economic/Law student, vice-president. While not dismissing the problems of the tertiary educated and professionals who are disabled, a move to give a mid-year symposium, Elizabeth Hastings, a counsellor at La Trobe University and member of the Victorian IYDP Committee, identified that this group formed a minority.

Income security was still the greatest need of a majority of disabled people said Ms Hastings, a counsellor at La Trobe University and member of the Victorian IYDP Committee.

In opening a national conference at Monash on education for disabled young people, the Governor General, Sir Galen Cowan, said that the most disturbing aspect of the present situation was the many disabled children and adolescents in institutions who have no access to education.

"One of the most severely handicapped have the least effective voice," Sir Galen said.

Dr Simon Haskell, Dean of the Institute of Special Education at Burwood State College, put a figure on the size of the problem. Some 40 per cent of the 328,000 children with learning difficulties were receiving no special consideration in Australian schools and 30 per cent of Australia's mentally retarded children living in the care of the Health Departments received no education at all, he said.

- Making waves in Engineering

A tank in which waves of cyclonic intensity can be generated has been put into operation in the Department of Mechanical Engineering this year.

A department workshop had to be modified to take the wave tank which consists of a 50 metre flume or channel, with a wave generator at one end.

The wave tank will be used to:
• Study the interaction of offshore structures, such as oil rigs, and waves and currents, and improve the structures' design.
• Train students in fluid dynamics and in the design of offshore structures.
• Study wave motion in continental shelf water, typically 100 metres deep.

The wave tank will be used to test rock protection for Woodside's underwater pipeline at its Rankin gas field on the North-West Shelf of Western Australia.
Salaries up 12%

Monash accounting graduates filled 19 per cent of positions offered by the 10 major chartered accounting firms in Melbourne last year.

In 1979 the University's graduates filled 28 per cent of such vacancies. There has been a corresponding increase in the recruitment of University of Melbourne students (up from 29 per cent in 1979 to 38 per cent last year) and, to a lesser extent, students of other institutions.

The decrease in the Monash figure can be explained in part by the large drop - 26 per cent - in the number of Monash final year accounting students eligible for employment.

Careers and Appointments Service records show that 147 eligible students were interviewed by chartered accounting firms in the Monash on-campus recruiting program in 1979. Last year 101 eligible students were interviewed. Of the 1979 figure 59 graduates - or 40 per cent - were accepted, compared to 42 graduates - or 70 per cent - in 1978.

Breakthrough by Professor Ron Brown

Monash graduates are now competitive in the market for professional jobs, some students have pointed out. Growth in the number of firms and students is being reflected in the level of job interviews, one Monash graduate reports.

A breakthrough in chemical analysis

Celia Rosser has revealed the beauty of Banksia. The first volume of the three-volume work, "Banksia", which features the watercolour drawings of Monash University artist Celia Rosser, was launched this year.

The text by Alex George, executive editor of Flora of Australia, a special project of the Commonwealth Bureau of Flora and Fauna, contains drawings and descriptions of 24 Banksia species in chronological order of their being described.

The plates, each 770mm x 550mm, are accurately reproduced from Mrs Rosser's watercolour drawings which are life-size to the original specimens.

More than 70 species of Banksia, all but one of which are endemic to Australia, have now been described and all will be included in the three volumes. Volume two, it is hoped, will be published in 1984 and the final one in 1988.

The plates, each 770mm x 550mm, are accurately reproduced from Mrs Rosser's watercolour drawings which are life-size to the original specimens.

More than 70 species of Banksia, all but one of which are endemic to Australia, have now been described and all will be included in the three volumes. Volume two, it is hoped, will be published in 1984 and the final one in 1988.

The first samples of Banksia — four "honeysuckles" — were collected by Joseph Banks and the Swede, Daniel Solander, at Botany Bay during Captain Cook's first landing on the east coast of Australia in 1770.

Research in the Monash Psychology department casts serious doubt on the efficiency of current courtroom practices.

It casts doubt both on the reliability of present identification procedures and on the methods of acquiring and testing evidence.

Monash psychologist, Dr Donald Thomson, who is conducting the research, points out that in a typical courtroom situation two things have to be established — the nature of the offence, and the identity of the offender (unless, of course, the offender is caught red-handed).

Both of these things depend almost entirely on the memory of the witness. Since the experiments in 1885 of Ebbinghaus, one of the early experimental psychologists, it has been known that the accuracy of recall is always highest soon after the event, and it declines, as a function of time, rapidly at first, then gradually.

The findings of Ebbinghaus have been confirmed many times over.

In view of this decline in the accuracy of recall with the passage of time, Dr Thomson has argued that the written statement of the witness, taken as soon after the event as possible, should provide the main basis of the charge for judge and jury.

However, there appears to be a marginal balance of opinion suggesting increased graduate intakes in 1982.