

Smoking and gene prevent Parkinson's

Public health

IT has long been known that smoking offers some protection against developing Parkinson's disease and now a PhD public health researcher has found out part of the reason why.

Yifu Deng studied the interplay between genetics, smoking and the development of Parkinson's disease with 400 people who had Parkinson's disease, and 400 people without it.

Dr Deng looked at each group's genetic background for the presence of the CYP2D6 gene, which had previously been suggested to metabolise the chemical compounds found in cigarette smoke, in both groups.

He found that smokers with the gene who metabolised the cigarette smoke compounds quickly were less likely to be protected than those who metabolised the chemical compounds more slowly.

"It seems that if the chemical compounds stay in the body longer they are more likely to have a preventative effect," Dr Deng said.

"It also seems that if you have the gene but you are not a smoker the gene may have no use

in preventing Parkinson's."

Dr Deng said it was not known how the cigarette smoke compounds protected against Parkinson's.

He warned that there were still many smokers who suffered from Parkinson's. Additionally, smoking was notorious for causing cancers.

Parkinson's disease is a common degenerative neurological disease in the elderly, affecting up to 4.9 per cent of Australians aged 55 and over.

"Our study findings aid in further understanding of the aetiology of Parkinson's disease and may help identify people who are at higher risk of the disease," he said.

The study is the first to look at the genetic epidemiology of Parkinson's disease by addressing individual genetic types in relation to cigarette smoke metabolism.

Dr Deng's study may provide the potential to reveal new targets for strategies of altering Parkinson's disease risk.

Dr Deng is a researcher with QUT's Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation.

- Niki Widdowson



Dr Yifu Deng is studying the link between genes, smoking and Parkinson's.



You are what you eat - wherever you shop

Public health

BRISBANE families take heart - a new QUT study into fruit and vegetable shopping has found that although you may be what you eat, it doesn't matter where you shop.

Public health researcher Elisabeth Winkler, from QUT's Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation, studied greengrocers, supermarkets and convenience stores across Brisbane and found availability and pricing weren't linked to what sort of socioeconomic area you lived and shopped in.

"American researchers have found that poorer neighbourhoods in some US cities have fewer shops selling fruit and vegetables and that their prices are higher," she said.

"But in Brisbane, it doesn't matter what socioeconomic area you live in - local shops sell a similar range of fruits

Researcher Elisabeth Winkler enjoys a healthy snack at QUT's Kelvin Grove campus.

and vegetables at comparable prices.

"Some areas have fewer local shops than others, but these areas are as likely to be affluent as poorer areas. We found that foods were, if anything, a little bit cheaper in lower socioeconomic areas."

Ms Winkler said the research was important because it dispelled the myth that it was harder to buy fruit and vegetables in poorer areas.

"It's well documented that low socioeconomic groups don't tend to buy and consume as many fruit and vegetables," she said.

"But this study shows that while access might be an issue in terms of owning a car or having a tight budget, in Brisbane, shoppers are no worse off for living in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area."

Ms Winkler said regular shoppers would know that fruit and vegetable prices fluctuated depending on the season and weather, but she said the same fluctuations were seen across the suburbs.

"My message is that, socioeconomically, Brisbane offers a level playing field in terms of accessing fruits and vegetables," she said.

Ms Winkler said fruit and vegetables were important to our health.

"Fruit and vegetables are rich sources of fibre and beneficial vitamins and minerals, and very low in substances that are detrimental to our health," she said.

"As a result, you can pretty much eat as much of them as you like. Nutritionists recommend we eat at least five servings of vegetables a day and two serves of fruit."

Ms Winkler's research was conducted as part of her public health PhD and analysed information previously gathered by the Brisbane Food Study, which was conducted by QUT and funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council. The study analysed 50 zones (rather than suburbs) around Brisbane, each with a 2.5km radius.

- Mechelle Webb

COMMENT



QUT's 40,000 students are now well into first semester studies and will be forming a strong view about the relevance and appeal of their course and unit choices, and about the value of their learning experiences and the quality of the teaching and research supervision they receive at QUT.

At the end of 2005, an independent panel reviewed QUT's teaching quality and support and found "a strong culture in support of learning and teaching at QUT".

The panel went on to reflect that "with the increasing requirement, both internally and externally, for forms of evidence that demonstrate the quality of teaching ... there is an opportunity for QUT to build further on this strong base by developing and strengthening the various means by which it assesses its own performance".

One of the strongest messages from the review, which we welcome, is that the university community needs to pay more attention to both the evaluation of teaching that is done by students and how we interpret, clarify, and act upon the information we receive from it; and how we inform students about what we have done in response.

This year, students at QUT will be offered greater opportunities to make observations and give their

views on what they find of value in curriculum and teaching, and on what they would like improved.

This includes a new and universal electronic survey to be launched from week nine that will invite students to comment on any or all aspects of their learning experience.

Feedback will be considered carefully so that we can continue to improve curriculum and pedagogy, and respond appropriately to the issues raised by students.

A firm and consistent message from students is that they value the 'real world' focus that a QUT degree promises.

And we will certainly be working to increase student involvement in 'real world' problem solving, professional practice, internships, and work experience and to better integrate these into the formal structure of our courses and the assessment of student work.

QUT has an excellent student body and a fine record both as a strongly teaching-focussed university and for its outstanding teachers and researchers and innovative curriculum.

These initiatives will build on this tradition.

Professor David Gardiner,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Academic)



Premier Peter Beattie flew in from cyclone-ravaged North Queensland to address this month's Business Leaders' Forum.

Premier's plea to forum

Business Leaders' Forum

FRESH from cyclone-Larry devastated Innisfail, Premier Peter Beattie opened the 2006 QUT Business Leaders' Forum series at the Hilton Hotel last week.

Mr Beattie began with a plea to the 500-plus guests for donations to the appeal to help rebuild the North Queensland communities that have lost their livelihoods and most of their infrastructure warning, the "social dislocation would go on for years".

On leadership, Mr Beattie said it was motivated by a desire to

improve or protect your society and a vision, "guts", brain power and communication to follow through.

His guiding vision was making Queensland the "smart state" and one of the ways his government had made this happen was the bringing together of universities to promote export education which is now worth \$1 billion to Queensland.

He acknowledged QUT's research collaboration agreement with Indian technology institutions (see opposite page) saying that the burgeoning economies of India and China were

changing our region.

He said Queensland's economy needed to be based on research and commercialisation, citing value-adding in mining, tourism and primary industries as examples of moving away from the traditional "rocks and crops" economy.

Mr Beattie said more could be done to add value to our natural products and we needed better funded universities to maximise this potential.

"If we don't fund universities properly we dumb our nation and we won't have the brains to lead us into the future," he said.

- Niki Widdowson

Sport scientist is new head



was Dean of Physical Education and a Professor of Motor Control.

He has written many scientific articles related to sport science, psychology, human movement science and pedagogy over the past decade.

He is also the author of several books on sport science topics including vision and action in sport, performance of interceptive actions, children's motor development and movement variability.

Professor Davids has a PhD in Physical Education from the University of Leeds and his previous British appointments include being made a Research Fellow for the Medical Research Council at Sheffield University, and a Professor of Motor Control at Manchester Metropolitan University.

His main research focus is on the study of movement coordination and skill acquisition.

LEADING sport scientist Professor Keith Davids has been appointed to QUT as the new Head of the School of Human Movement Studies.

Professor Davids, pictured above, comes to QUT from the University of Otago in New Zealand, where he

Master doco maker on board

AWARD-winning documentary maker Mike Rubbo, pictured right, has been appointed Adjunct Professor in film and television.

A former head of ABC Television's documentary unit, Professor Rubbo's most recent documentary *All About Olive* was aired nationally on the ABC last month.

Professor Rubbo, who has previously taught at Australian Film Television and Radio School, Harvard, New York University, the University of California Los Angeles and Stanford will teach QUT postgraduate students the art of documentary making.

He said documentaries were important in global terms for the functioning of the democratic process.

"Documentaries are all about putting yourself in the shoes of others, about having empathy with others.



"They are a dialogue with ourselves as a society. They thrive on fairness," Professor Rubbo said.

In the late 1990s, Professor Rubbo was executive producer of *Race Around the World*, the ABC's documentary series where aspiring young film-makers posted home short (four-minute) films every ten days from all over the world.

Indigenous institute opens

Education

AUSTRALIA'S first Indigenous leadership institute, a joint initiative between Queensland University of Technology and Education Queensland, was officially opened in Cherbourg this month.

The Indigenous Education Leadership Institute aims to improve education and employment opportunity for Indigenous communities.

The institute is headed by Dr Chris Sarra, the former principal of Cherbourg State School, and

under whose leadership unexplained absenteeism levels dropped and training and employment opportunities increased.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Coaldrake, who took part in the official opening, said QUT was investing \$150,000 in the institute as well as offering staff support and resources.

He said the institute would deliver leadership programs to principals and teachers to enhance the teaching of Indigenous students.

The institute will strive to equip these school leaders with the skills they need to tackle a range of issues

including high absenteeism and poor student performance.

Professor Coaldrake said the institute would be a living laboratory

"As the young people of Cherbourg go about their everyday school life, they will be contributing to our research efforts," he said.

"This research will, in turn, benefit future generations of Indigenous Queenslanders."

Professor Coaldrake said the QUT's undergraduate and postgraduate students would use the institute's programs to enhance their tertiary experience.

V-C Scholars welcomed

AN elite group of 45 first-year students has made a great start to life at university in 2006 as recipients of prestigious QUT Vice-Chancellor's Scholarships.

As long as these select students maintain above-average grades, they will each receive \$5000 a year for up to four years to put towards their university study costs.

Two enthusiastic recipients from Central Queensland are 17 year-old Natalie McCosker and 18-year-old Jacinta McDonald, pictured from left to right.

A graduate of Blackwater High, Natalie has started a Bachelor of Education while Jacinta has embarked on a double degree in nursing and human movement studies after graduating from Marist College in Emerald.

The girls received their certificates along with all of this year's scholarship winners at a recent ceremony at the Gardens Point campus.

The scholarships were introduced last year and are only open to high achievers who receive an OP score of 1 or 2.

Like all scholarship holders, Jacinta and Natalie must maintain a GPA (grade point average) of 5 to retain their scholarships.



QUT/Smith Family in new bond

Equity

KATINA Clarke is a second-year arts student whose career goal of working in foreign affairs in Asia is being realised with support from The Smith Family.

Katina and her three brothers have all received assistance from The Smith Family to complete their high schooling and make university education a reality, not just a dream, for this talented low-income family.

When she started at QUT Katina received a lump sum that enabled her to buy a computer, books, stationery and transport to university.

"I wouldn't have been able to go to university without the financial help I received from The Smith Family," said Katina who is applying for a cadetship with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

To enable more students such as Katina access to a university education The Smith Family and QUT have formalised a new partnership that offers scholarships and other forms of assistance to students from low-income families to help them succeed at university.

Under the partnership, QUT will provide a number of scholarships of at least \$2000 to students who are part of The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* program.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Coaldrake said the agreement was the

first between a Queensland university and The Smith Family.

"The agreement will further our shared aim of ensuring that disadvantaged young people can create a better future through education," Professor Coaldrake said.

The Smith Family Queensland general manager Roley Cook said the *Learning for Life* program allowed disadvantaged students to focus on their studies without having to worry about the financial situation at home.

"There are many talented young people like Katina who have big plans for their future but need a little support to make them happen," he said.

The university will also provide Year 11 and 12 students a free career counselling session on post-school study options and offer each QUT student a re-conditioned desk-top computer for home use.

Over the next three years, QUT will also contribute \$30,000 a year to The Smith Family towards the cost of providing educational and personal support to the *Learning for Life* students and their families.

"There are many cultural as well as financial barriers to going to university. That's why we are working with an organisation which focuses on low-income school students and their families," Professor Coaldrake said.

- Niki Widdowson



The Smith Family is helping arts student Katina Clarke achieve her career goals.

New technology ties with India



Information security

QUT has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IITM) and the Indian Society for Electronic Transactions and Security (SETS).

The agreement was signed in Chennai, India, this month and was witnessed by Prime Minister John Howard, who was visiting India at the time.

The purpose of the agreement is to promote collaboration in the general areas of information security and intelligence analysis.

"The importance of information security in today's world cannot be underestimated,"

said QUT Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Coaldrake, pictured at left with IITM Director Dr M.S. Ananth, far left, and Prime Minister Howard.

"Not only do we live in a world where all aspects of our lives are increasingly dependent on information and communications technologies, but we also live in a post 9/11 world where this dependence is under constant threat.

"Additionally, viruses, identity theft and other problems all contribute to making the internet a dangerous place."

Professor Coaldrake said the partners all brought unique strengths to the collaboration.

QUT hosts the Information Security Institute (ISI), one of the largest concentrations of researchers in the information security area worldwide, with more than 110 academics and research students.

IITM is one of the world's leading technology-focused tertiary institutions and SETS is a unique partnership between government and industry, with a mandate to investigate security issues, and particular focus on the Indian financial sector.

"This agreement represents a very strategic and timely response to the electronic security needs of today," Professor Coaldrake said.

Generation gap linked to apprenticeship failure

Psychology & counselling

"DESPERATE", "frustrated" apprentice employers are calling for further research to find out why up to 53 per cent of apprentices in some industries leave before they qualify.

Professor Kathryn Gow, from the Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation, has been inundated with requests from employment bodies around Australia for her research report on psychological factors influencing apprenticeship completion.

Professor Gow undertook the study with undergraduate students Chantelle Warren, David Anthony and Connie Hinschen, all of whom had had experience as apprentices.

Employers, too, have asked her to continue researching a host of characteristics of today's apprentice which they suspect are hindering apprenticeship completion.

"Employers are saying 'what are we going to do?'" They are desperate to

get good apprentices, and incredibly frustrated by the fact that in some industries 20 per cent of apprentices leave within the first six weeks," Professor Gow said.

"Many employers say apprentices arrive with unrealistic expectations of what they will be doing as first year apprentices.

"They cite 'attitude' that encompasses rudeness, impatience, and short temper; unexplained absenteeism; and lack of interpersonal social skills which includes disrespectfulness, as problems."

At the same time, Professor Gow said many apprentices reported "dragon bosses".

"These are the bosses caught in a time warp of 40 or 50 years ago when apprentices were expected to 'pay their dues' and make the tea, sweep the workroom and nothing else during their first year."

Professor Gow said intergenerational differences could be a factor in low completion rates.

"Employers say many apprentices don't know how to relate to the boss, how to communicate what they want or to ask for help.

"They say apprentices 'lose their cool' very easily and are impatient to do the entire job before they had been taught."

She said employers were also mystified about regular absenteeism.

"They don't know whether a high reported rate of regularly not turning up for work is caused by 'a hard night out', depression, the idea that it is okay to take a sickie or whether they just hate the job," Professor Gow said.

Some employers only took on older apprentices in the hope they would be more reliable and loyal to the business but this had had varying results.

"One employer who thought he was working outside the square in taking on a female apprentice aged 24+ in an industrial trade said she just started to stop turning up regularly."

- Niki Widdowson



Professor Gow's study revealed many apprentices reported "dragon bosses".

Image courtesy Department of Employment and Training.

The changing face of business

Entrepreneurship

MORE than ever before young Australian women are choosing entrepreneurship as a career choice and starting up their own businesses, according to QUT researcher Dr Rebekah Bennett.

Dr Bennett said many women were taking the risk and starting up their own business.

"Young women today are being bolder than their mothers and are prepared to take the risk of entering the uncharted territory of big businesses ownership," she said.

Dr Bennett said unlike previous generations many young women were choosing to become business operators as a career choice rather than as a result of circumstances.

Dr Bennett and former QUT Professor Susan Dann's research was recently published in the *International Handbook of Women and Small Business Entrepreneurship*.

Their research has found that younger women are more likely to be university educated, enter male-dominated industries, use banks as a source of capital, have a mentor and take on a higher level of business risk.

She said these were characteristics traditionally associated with men.

"This is opening the door for Australian women to become successful

business leaders," Dr Bennett said.

As part of Dr Bennett's research she has studied entrepreneurial women including her mum Kay Russell, one of the first females to start up a finance and insurance company in Brisbane.

"In the past women have been very low risk takers and for this reason they haven't really competed with men as entrepreneurs," Dr Bennett said.

"What we are seeing now is women are taking greater business risks yet they are also maintaining the positive 'female' traits of being good planners and accepting advice of others."

Dr Bennett's and Professor Dann previously researched women in the baby boomer and Generation X groups and are now starting new research with Dr Judy Drennan (QUT) and Dr Stephen Dann (ANU) on the latest generation of women entrepreneurs - Generation Y.

She is looking for women from the age of 18 onwards who are currently running their own business to participate in an online survey. Email rebekah.bennett@qut.edu.au.

- Sandra Hutchinson



Entrepreneur Kay Russell, left, was studied by her daughter Dr Rebekah Bennett.



Dr Paula McDonald found sexual harassment was still rife in the workplace.

Workers vulnerable to cyber-sleaze

Business

MODERN technology is making people more vulnerable to workplace sexual harassment and perpetrators easier to catch out, a QUT researcher has said.

A postdoctoral research fellow in the School of Management, Dr Paula McDonald, said advances in technology enabled perpetrators to access victims more easily and harass them outside the workplace and beyond work hours.

"However, it is a double-edged sword because offensive text messages, emailed pornography and digital photos can be used as evidence when making a complaint," she said.

"The perpetrator leaves a cyber-trail which can strengthen a complainant's case when talking to their organisation or an external commission."

Dr McDonald cautioned that technology may prove a blunt weapon in the fight against sexual harassment

which is still rife in the Australian workforce, despite being legislated against for 20 years.

The researcher said prevalence rates had been cited as high as 50 per cent across a wide range of industries, occupations and locations in Australia.

Dr McDonald said many complaints remained unresolved as victims of harassment came up against ineffective organisational responses, or were discouraged by lengthy industrial processes through formal structures.

The researcher recently completed a data analysis of complaints with community advocacy organisation the Queensland Working Women's Service and discovered hundreds of women were subjected to harassment each year.

"I was surprised to discover the seriousness and extent of sexual harassment that some women have experienced and the undignified way in which they were treated," she said.

Dr McDonald said one case involved a manager placing a webcam under his employee's desk, while others involved attempted rape, unwanted physical contact, threats or coercion associated with sexual propositions, unwanted exposure to pornography and sexual teasing, jokes, remarks or comments.

She said 77 per cent of more than 650 complainants had either left the organisation where the harassment occurred or taken leave of absence of up to seven months.

"This represents a considerable cost to the organisation in terms of recruitment, training and development but the untold cost is the psychological impact on the victims," she said.

"A more favourable outcome would be for the harasser to be addressed in a transparent way and made aware of the impact their behaviour is having on these women and that they have to stop the behaviour."

- Carmen Myler

Teens make good counsellors

Psychology

MANY adolescents are powerful, natural counsellors of their fellow teenagers as long as they are not expected to follow adult counselling models nor labelled "peer counsellor".

Psychology researcher Dr Kathryn Geldard said all teenagers should be taught to sharpen their innate peer helping skills in a bid to stem teen depression, stress, self-harm and suicide.

She said that although adolescents were likely to talk to a friend, they were less likely to seek out another teenager who has been trained as a "peer counsellor".

"Peers are usually the first to know their friends are experiencing problems. Young people have their own natural conversational style of helping each other that can be highly effective," Dr Geldard said.

"This style is different from the

way most adults communicate and some important techniques used by adolescents are the opposite of those of adult counsellors.

"Young people don't need training in traditional counselling skills because these could hinder their natural ability to help their friends.

"Instead they should be taught to use existing skills to initiate or invite their friends to talk," Dr Geldard said.

In her PhD study of Queensland students in Years 8 to 11, Dr Geldard found teenagers used some techniques incompatible with adult counselling techniques.

"Young people give each other advice which is generally considered taboo in adult counselling.

"The difference is adolescents listen to advice from each other without feeling any need to take the advice. They understand that their friend is talking in terms of what they would do themselves," Dr Geldard said.

"Young people also make really

evaluative responses and will tell their friend if they think they have done a stupid thing. They also offer endorsements such as declaring support, loyalty and defending their friend to show solidarity".

Dr Geldard said these techniques appeared to be effective because adolescents were at a maturational stage where they sought other points of view from peers to help sort out their own beliefs and attitudes.

Her findings suggested teaching adult counselling methods could be inappropriate when training adolescent peer counsellors.

"It would be useful for all adolescents to be trained at school in peer helping skills using a training format which enhanced normal adolescent communication processes.

"This would avoid the problems involved in training only a few who would be stigmatised when labelled as 'peer counsellors'."

- Niki Widdowson



Dr Kathryn Geldard says teenagers make natural counsellors.

The threat of animal to human transplants

Social change

ANIMAL-to-human transplants might be banned in Australia but this doesn't mean the community is protected from the potential health risks, according to PhD researcher Peta Cook.

Ms Cook, from QUT's Centre for Social Change Research, is studying the challenges of regulating xenotransplantation or animal-to-human transplants in today's world of medical tourism.

Ms Cook said while it was illegal for people to undergo animal-to-human transplants in Australia, there were no regulations preventing a person from having the surgery overseas and then returning home.

"My research highlights the big black hole that currently exists when it comes to xenotourism or medical tourism involving animal-to-human transplants," she said.

"Xenotransplantation involves transplanting or infusing living animal cells, tissues or organs into a human recipient.

"It is being used in a laboratory in Mexico City to treat Type-1 diabetes and all a tourist needs is US \$35,000."

Ms Cook said in Mexico City doctors were taking insulin-



producing cells from pigs and implanting them in people with Type-1 diabetes.

"Worst case scenario is the person with Type-1 diabetes experiences no positive changes and instead, experiences negatives," she said.

"Best case scenario is the cells will produce insulin in the human body reducing or even negating the need for insulin injections."

Ms Cook said this technology presented many dilemmas from both a medical perspective as well as on moral, ethical and legal grounds.

"My main concern is that at the moment there is a moratorium in Australia on the practice of animal-to-human transplants because of the health implications," she said.

"But tourists can go to Mexico City, have it done and then come back into the country carrying infections that may create human-to-human disease."

"The danger is that I can go to the CBD today and be surrounded by xenotourists who will expose me to a clinical trial that has not been approved in Australia."

Ms Cook will present her research at the Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand 2006 Annual Scientific Meeting on March 31 in Canberra.

- Sandra Hutchinson



Saviour snakes

Deadly Australian taipans are proving to be real life savers, thanks to new QUT research.

Life sciences

AUSTRALIAN snakes' venom could provide the next generation of human therapeutic drugs.

A blood-clotting protein in taipan venom has been identified by PhD life sciences researcher Liam St Pierre to rapidly stop excessive bleeding during vascular surgery and major trauma.

The genetic code for the toxin, called Factor X (Factor Ten), was identified during a study of the venom of eight of Australia's deadliest land snakes for its therapeutic potential.

Dr St Pierre's study focused on the genes responsible for the pro-coagulant or blood clotting agent called Factor X in the coastal taipan's venom which could stem blood flow in a matter of seconds.

A drug lead based on Factor X is being evaluated for clinical trials by bio pharmaceutical development company QrxPharma.

"Australian snakes literally have a two-pronged attack when they bite their prey," Dr St Pierre said.

"Firstly, venom injection causes massive blood clots instantaneously followed by paralysis as a result of neurotoxins which eventually immobilise and kill the victim."

Dr St Pierre said mammals and snakes naturally produced a small amount of Factor X in their liver.

"Snakes have developed the ability to deliver massive fatal doses of Factor X in their venom to specifically target the systems of mammals," he said.

"Snakes produce a more stable and faster acting form of Factor X, the venom being the only source of Factor X other than mammalian livers."

Dr St Pierre studied the venom of the inland and coastal taipan, the common brown, the red bellied black, the mulga, the rough-scaled snake, Stephens banded snake and the tiger snake.

"Only the mulga did not have Factor X, as it has developed its own unique mechanism of killing prey."

Dr St Pierre said snake venom was a huge untapped source of potential drug therapies.

His study is the most detailed ever conducted on the genes responsible for Australian snakes' toxins. It is hoped a comprehensive study of all the venom components from Australian snakes may yield further novel components that could be targeted as human drugs.

Dr St Pierre's work was co-supervised by Professor Martin Lavin at the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. Research into the components of Australian snake venoms is funded by a \$1.5 million ARC (Australian Research Council) Linkage grant to UniQuest in collaboration with commercial partner QrxPharma.

- Niki Widdowson

“Snakes have developed the ability to deliver massive fatal doses of (blood clotting agent) Factor X in their venom to specifically target the systems of mammals.”

in BRIEF...

Researchers to address top financiers

Two QUT researchers have been invited to speak at an international conference in Spain for financiers from across the globe. Rob Bianchi and Evan Reedman, PhD students from QUT's School of Economics and Finance, will be Australia's sole representatives at the *European Financial Management Association's 2006 Merton H Miller Doctoral Seminar* to be held in June. They will present their research to date on superannuation investment options and risks.

India study tour a hit

A group of business students are still talking about their successful study tour to India over the summer break. Group leader Michael Cox from the School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations, took students to the Management Development Institute of Gurgaon, south of Delhi, for a course of onsite lectures, industry visits and cultural tours. Tour highlights included an address by Admiral Chopra, the Deputy Chief of India's armed forces, visits to Hero Honda, the largest motorcycle factory in the world, visits to fashion outlet GIVO which supplies to New York Fashion houses, and cultural tours of Delhi. The tour will be offered again in 2007. Interested students can email ma.cox@qut.edu.au.

Calling outstanding students

The quest is now on to find QUT's top student leader. Nominations close on Thursday, April 13 for the annual QUT Alumni Student Leadership Awards. So if you know an outstanding undergraduate student who is going above and beyond their curricular activities to make a difference to the university and the community in which they live, you can nominate them by simply downloading a form at www.alumni.qut.edu.au/eventsawards/slwards/nominationform.jsp. For further information please contact the Alumni Office on 3864 4427 or email alumni@qut.edu.au.

Biotech takes Belinda to Sweden

QUT biotechnology innovation graduate Belinda Luscombe has landed a marketing and business development position with Danish biotech company Novozymes. Belinda left Australia last week to work in the technology transfer office at Novozymes' Swedish site in Lund. As one of the first graduates from the Bachelor of Biotechnology Innovation course, Belinda was inundated with job offers from Australia and overseas. She has been working at Tissue Therapies, the Brisbane-based QUT start-up company specialising in wound healing technologies.



Youngsters Elliot Alexander (left) and Gus Gannon (right) benefit from a donation from Symes Grove Retirement Village residents Ivan Lahey, Alan Arkinstall and Jack Balthes.

Teaching for all ages

Community

A QUT community initiative has helped a group of Brisbane retirees continue operating their hobby workshop.

Leading the project, Terry Beach from the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, said Symes Grove Retirement Village residents had their workshop closed down early last year because of health and safety concerns.

"While the residents' workshop at Taigum was more of a pass-time for residents than a business, they still needed to have certain safety standards in place," he said.

Mr Beach said this was where QUT was able to help out.

Mr Beach said it was the collaboration between Symes Grove's safety personnel and the technical expertise provided by QUT staff, which led

to the development of 60-plus safety documents and ensured the facility met the Queensland Occupational Health and Safety legislation.

"We were able to adapt the format for many of the safety procedures that we undertake here at QUT and put them in context for the retirement village."

"QUT staff also conducted a training seminar to ensure residents are competent in the use of the equipment on site."

Mr Beach said QUT had committed to continue to work with Symes Grove management providing assistance with internal audits, to ensure the residents maintained the safety standards required.

"The majority of residents involved were qualified tradesmen earlier in life, however current legislation requires documented evidence that equipment

is maintained to an appropriate standard, operating procedures are in place and that training has been provided," he said.

He said thanks to QUT the residents at Symes Grove could continue making children's toys, which they either donated or sold to raise money for charity.

"They are doing great work there and QUT wanted to make sure this work continued," he said.

In recognition of the university's support, the residents have donated a children's table and chairs to Gardens Point Child Care Centre run by QUT's Student Guild.

"There are many winners out of this project," Mr Beach said.

"The residents can continue their hobby and children at QUT benefit from their efforts."

- Sandra Hutchinson

about IQ

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Switch on solar: expert

Engineering systems

SWAPPING electric hot water for solar could be a cost-effective answer to easing the pressure on the state's electricity industry, according to a QUT

energy expert.

Dr Kame Khouzam, from the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, said with demand for electricity growing at a rapid rate it was essential to look for ways to improve the use of viable alternative energy sources.

"Solar has always been a minor player in Queensland's electricity market because of its limitations as an energy resource," Dr Khouzam said.

"Solar power plants require large blocks of land to operate. On average only 100 watts of power can be generated per square metre of solar panel."

He said for utility scale generation solar concentrators could be a better option.

"But what is being overlooked is the capability of solar power to be used as a heating source."

Dr Khouzam said electric hot water accounted for one third of residential electricity usage.

"If more Queenslanders converted to solar hot water this would dramatically reduce demand for electricity," he said.

"It could cut usage by 30 per cent which in turn could see power bills drop the same."

He said solar hot water was an economically viable option.

Dr Khouzam said in south east

Queensland the average residential consumption of electricity had gone up by about 10 per cent in the past five years, mainly due to the increase in air-conditioning.

"This is putting pressure on our networks and transmission lines and power companies are being forced to implement costly upgrades and augmentation of the system."

"While Queensland currently has enough reserve capacity to meet its demand for the next four years, the problem is that some parts of the distribution and transmission network is becoming congested."

"Areas like the Brisbane's CBD and some newly developed residential and industrial areas such as Greenbank and Ipswich are experiencing rapid growth in electricity demand."

"For the CBD in particular, it maybe wise to investigate the use of standby generators located at major buildings, especially at times for peak demand."

"These generators are only used during a blackout and are again another source of untapped electricity."

Dr Khouzam said if we move to solar hot water, more energy efficient lighting and appliances and reduce electricity waste we would lessen the potential for future blackouts across the state.

- Sandra Hutchinson

free & low cost health clinics on campus

QUT staff and students can access free or low-cost health clinics at the Kelvin Grove campus in O Block (B wing) - just a short walk from the Kelvin Grove busway.

Podiatry Clinic

Services include general foot care, diabetes management, surgery, children's foot care, acute foot problems and orthoses. Examinations are carried out by Podiatry students under the direct supervision of fully qualified Podiatrists.

Cost (per consultation): \$20, or \$15 for students/health care card holders.

To make an appointment, phone Cathy Fowler on 3864 5652.

Optometry Clinic

The clinic provides all general optometry services and eye examinations, as well as specialist services including contact lenses, children's vision, and vision rehabilitation for visually impaired people. Examinations are either free or bulk-billed.

QUT staff and students receive a discount on any pair of glasses or contact lenses purchased from the clinic.

To make an appointment, phone 3864 5743 or 3864 5695.

Human Movement Studies Clinic: QUT Staff Fitness Program

Take advantage of low-cost personal exercise programs and fitness assessments by qualified physiologists and Human Movement Studies students.

Costs: Fitness assessment - \$35; 10 session pass - \$45; 20 session pass - \$80.

For an appointment, phone 3864 5819.

More Information

For further details about all the clinics visit www.clinics.qut.edu.au

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Worlds apart ... but QUT & Germany partner as one

International

FROM international exchange student, to visiting fellow and now PhD researcher, German-born Jan Recker has decided to call Australia home, at least for the next few years while he completes his studies at QUT.

The 26-year-old has hailed QUT's partnerships with German universities as a huge success and attributes it with giving him countless opportunities to mix his love of Australia with his dedication for research.

QUT boasts strong links with German universities which Jan said had led to exchange programs, collaborative research projects and opportunities for both countries.

"I love the Queensland environment, the weather, the surf and all the friendly people but it is really how the research is conducted at QUT that keeps me here," he said.

Jan's first QUT experience was in 2003 when he came to Australia to study information technology as an exchange student from the University of Muenster in Germany.

"I loved the place so much that I applied to come back as a visiting fellow in 2005," he said.

"And last year I made the decision to do my PhD at QUT so I formally enrolled."

Jan's research, which is being undertaken within the School of Information Systems, is looking at ways of using computer technology to build better businesses.

"The problems I am looking into effect organisations worldwide," he said.

"For example an insurance company might have a filing process which involves a number of people handling the same document.

"What I am doing is modelling ways to improve the way organisations and companies

do business and look for opportunities to make the processes more efficient and effective."

Jan will take part in a special event which is being held at QUT Gardens Theatre Foyer between April 26 to 28 to celebrate the strong partnerships between Germany and Queensland.

The German/Queensland Science and Technology Week, to be run in conjunction with the German Festival, will showcase the technology that is being developed as a result of partnerships between universities and institutes in Queensland and Germany.

The event will also provide information on existing student exchange programs to Germany.

More than 80 German students are currently studying at QUT both in undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

- Sandra Hutchinson



IT researcher Jan Recker is helping build QUT-German ties.



Malaysian education students Hamzah Afifah, Abdul Hadi Fatiyah and Ismail Khairun Nisha.

Malaysians' sunny arrival

Education

THE adventure of studying in Australia is only just beginning for these three young Malaysian women.

Hamzah Afifah, Abdul Hadi Fatiyah and Ismail Khairun Nisha are among 25 students from Malaysia who have moved to Brisbane to spend two years with QUT's Faculty of Education to learn how to teach English to Malaysian school children.

They have already completed the first year of their Bachelor of Education Studies (Primary TEFL) in Kuala Lumpur and will return to Malaysia for their final year after they complete their Australian studies.

The new international students were presented with flowers during a recent welcome lunch at Kelvin Grove campus. Another 24 Malaysian

students are starting their second year at QUT as part of the same program.

QUT is one of five universities to be selected by the Ministry of Education Malaysia to help educate its teachers to teach English as a foreign language.

Director of International Development for the Faculty of Education, Associate Professor Bob Elliott, said there were two major aims for the visitors' time at QUT.

"We want to maximise opportunities for students' immersion in the academic and cultural life of the faculty and the wider community, as well as prepare them for their professional roles as teachers in Malaysia," he said.

QUT's relationship with the Ministry of Education Malaysia also includes educating science, and design and technology teachers.

- Mechelle Webb

For ages I haven't smiled as now...

Just Now!

Now, just now,
I can have a deep breath of freedom's air.
Now, just now,
I can sleep without nightmares.
Now, just now,
I can move,
Without mountains of fear on my chest.
Now, just now,
I can feel freed.
Now, just now,
I can feel safe.
Now, just now,
I can say: ages of fright have gone.

For ages I haven't slept like now.
For ages I haven't smiled as now.
For ages I haven't said my name,
Since I have lost it...!

I never believed in a second homeland,
However, I have a second one,
Now, just now...!

Sabah Al-Ansari

Harmony Day

IRAQI writer Sabah Al-Ansari left his homeland after dictator Saddam Hussein's regime arrested and killed two of his brothers and three cousins.

He came to Australia on a humanitarian visa - now Australia is his home and he has told his story through poetry.

Two of his poems have been published in a new book *Alone, Together* launched at QUT on Harmony Day (March 21), a day that supports cultural diversity and anti-racism.

Alone, Together is an anthology of stories, experiences, poems and recipes from Brisbane refugees and asylum seekers.

The book was made possible with a QUT Community Service grant and

the support of around 30 QUT staff volunteers.

Proceeds from book sales will go to the Brisbane Refugee Claimants Support Centre which provides support to community-based refugees and asylum seekers.

Copies of the book are available through the centre by phoning 07 3357 9013 or online at www.refugees.org.au.

- Toni Chambers



Iraqi writer Sabah Al-Ansari gave an emotional reading of his poems at the Harmony Day launch. At left, one of his poems featured in the new book *Alone, Together*.

WHAT'S on...

Theatre

- *It's a Dad Thing!*

Coming to the QUT Gardens Theatre from April 5 to 7 is *It's a Dad Thing!*, a show that examines parenthood from a strictly male perspective through a series of fast-paced vignettes, some serious, some hysterical, monologues, sketches and songs. Book with GardensTix on 07 3864 4455.



Events

► MARCH 30

QUT graduates and friends based in Sydney are invited by the Sydney Alumni Group to attend a cocktail reception with guest speaker, Network Ten news presenter Tracey Spicer. Tracey will be speaking on *The hurdles faced by women working in the Australian media*. Venue will be the Radisson Plaza Hotel, Sydney. For more information call 07 3864 2821.

► APRIL 6

Hear world-renowned culture and communication scholar Professor Toby Miller speak on *Global Hollywood 2010* at a public lecture from 6pm to 7.30pm in The Hall at the Creative Industries Precinct at Kelvin Grove. This lecture will open a series of six public addresses by

Professor Miller at QUT during April, May. A detailed schedule can be found at www.cci.edu.au.

► APRIL 20 - 23

If you are keen to have a go at fire twirling, stage combat, physical theatre, arts management and scriptwriting then head to the Fusion Festival at QUT, an event run in collaboration with QUT's drama society Vena Cava. For more details on times and venues go to www.undergroundproductionsuq.org.au/fusion.html.

► APRIL 26 - 28

German/Australian technology, research partnerships and exchange programs will be highlighted at a three-day Science and Technology event at QUT Gardens Theatre. It will be hosted by the German Consul-General along with local and state governments and Queensland's

universities.

► NOW - MAY 7

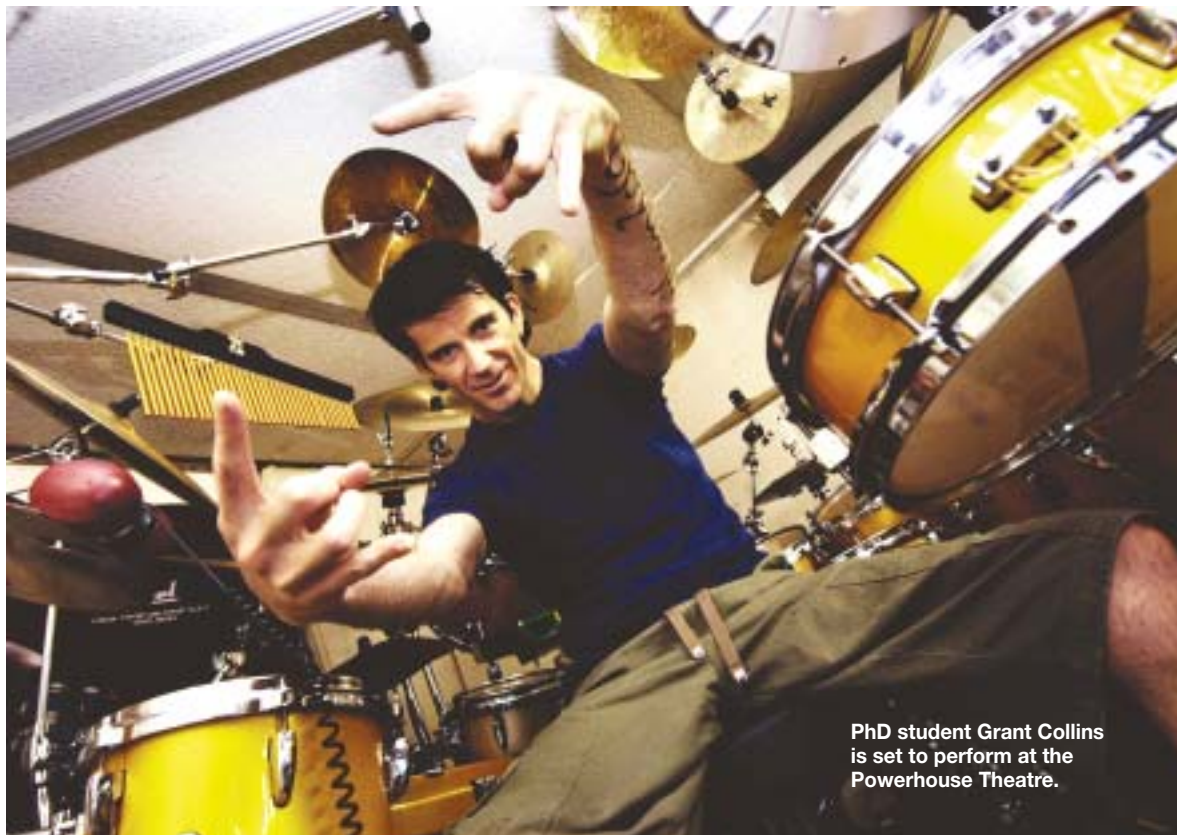
View the works of potter, Phillip McConnell at the QUT Art Museum. Phillip, who is the son of master potter Carl McConnell (1926-2003), draws on the long ceramic tradition of Japan in his pieces. Entry is free.

Conferences

► JUNE 28 - 30

The QUT Oodgeroo Unit hosts the 2006 (Re)Contesting Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Studies Conference on the Gold Coast for educators, researchers and community practitioners from around Australia and the world. Visit www.indigenousknowledge.qut.edu.au for details.

► Visit www.whatson.qut.edu.au for more event listings.



PhD student Grant Collins is set to perform at the Powerhouse Theatre.

Grant's beat goes on

Music

PhD student Grant Collins will debut his latest music in a solo concert at the Powerhouse Theatre on April 23.

Grant Collins in Concert will feature a selection of his latest compositions including *Swordfish*, *Commando*, *Tubby the Robot* and *DNABII*.

Grant, who has made fame by playing the biggest drum kit in the southern hemisphere, is studying music composition and performance through Creative Industries.

"My music is unique," he said. "I am looking to create music which is out of the ordinary by incorporating contemporary and

classical compositional techniques."

Grant said the concert would feature new works, which were a direct result from his research as a PhD student.

"The new pieces really take the dimension of solo drumset performance to a new level," he said.

"I'm challenging myself in every form, physical, mental and conceptual."

"Many of the pieces sound like a percussion orchestra with each limb playing their own distinctive parts."

Grant's study includes music composition, performance and touring.

"This is my first solo concert here in Brisbane since last July when I played

to a sold-out crowd for the release of my debut DVD *Live @ the Tivoli*," he said.

"I will be debuting new works at the Powerhouse."

Grant's drum kit known as the 'the Beast' boasts more than 22 drums, 34 cymbals, 18 different pedals, 11 toms, five bass drum and four snares - a far cry from the five piece drum kit most musicians play.

Seats for *Grant Collins in Concert* are \$20 to \$25 and can be booked by calling 07 3358 8600. The concert commences at 6pm at the Powerhouse Theatre on Sunday, April 23.

- Sandra Hutchinson



QUT's Christian Sprenger in action.

Games fever hits QUT

THEY might have been missing from lectures but three of QUT's star athletes were putting everything they'd learnt in the sporting arena into practice at the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Damon Kelly, Christian Sprenger and Scott Robertson, who are all QUT Student Guild Sports Scholarship holders, were part of the record 4500 athletes that took part in the Melbourne Games.

Kelly, a fourth-year student studying a Bachelor of Applied Science in quantity surveying, represented Australia in the men's 105kg weightlifting events, *pictured right*.

In the pool Sprenger showed off his swimming ability in the men's 50m, 100m, and 200m breaststroke events. Sprenger is a first-year industrial design student with Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering.

Robertson, a first-year student studying a Bachelor of Urban Development in construction management, took to the diving

platform competing in the 1m springboard, synchronised 3m springboard and synchronised 10m platform.

QUT's Student Guild offers four full and 10 half sports scholarships each year to elite athletes to help them balance their sport, study and work.



What do you remember about growing up?

QUT Art Museum

ARTIST Debra Porch grew up in bitterly-cold Chicago where the weather could plummet to minus 20 degrees and regularly engulfed the city in snow.

It's a childhood she remembers well ... or does she? The QUT visual arts PhD student is examining the powers - and limitations - of her own memory in a new exhibition at QUT Art Museum.

The free exhibition, called *"humming..."*, poses questions about the human memory and the fragmented recollection of the past that we all live with.

"The exhibition is focused on my recollections of the past," she said.

"All the images are based on fragmented stories that I remember - or embellished or just made up."

"I grew up in Chicago so this whole work is based on the cold. One of the pieces is a child's tricycle wrapped up in knitted wool, mohair and synthetic fibre, *pictured right*. The trike is a symbol of memories that are protected or that have just been left out in the cold."

The exhibition features a range of textile, manipulated and found objects as well as DVD, video and photographic works, including a series of photos illuminated in giant "ice cube" boxes.

Debra said *humming...* was the final exhibition in her three-year PhD at QUT, which she is completing with the assistance of a scholarship from Creative Industries.

She has been working as an artist since the 1970s and moved to Australia in 1983.

QUT Art Museum curator Gordon Craig said *humming...* was an exhibition which everyone could relate to.

"We all have memories, especially from childhood, that are fragmented in our minds," he said.

"We can't always recall the entire context - certain



details will be completely clear, and others will be embellished and altered."

The exhibition also focuses on memory as a tool to understanding mortality, and the relationship between "presence" and "absence".

Debra Porch's *humming...* will run from March 16 to April 30 at the QUT Art Museum on Gardens Point campus.

- Mechelle Webb