

Education Program in Reproduction and Development (EPRD) News

January 2015

It's been a while since our last newsletter, and what a busy couple of years we have had, with again, record numbers of students enrolling in our two post-graduate courses. The Graduate Diploma in Reproductive Science (GRS) course has become a very popular option with over 40 students enrolling in the past 2 years. The Master of Clinical Embryology course (MCE) continues to be oversubscribed, with 58 on campus and 6 off campus students graduating in the past two years. Our research Masters: Master of Reproductive Science is also regaining popularity, with several students on our books. It remains commonwealth supported for local students and has an easy conversion pathway to a PhD.

Alumni News

Many of our recent MCE graduates returned to their countries to start or resume their careers in embryology and now you can locate our 2013 alumni in Poland, New Zealand, Thailand, Chile, Bahrain, Sri Lanka, India, and Indonesia and nine local students from 2013 started their embryology careers in Auckland (3) Brisbane (3) and Melbourne (3). Special mention goes to local Melbourne girl Katie Balloch who battled visas to take on her first embryology job in Las Vegas. She is doing very well and recently has been joined by her dog! Our graduating off-campus student Kate Hull has also made the move to the US (Boston IVF). She completed the GRS in 2010 after which she was fortunate to secure a job at Fertility SA in Adelaide, while also signing up part time for the MCE (*a no brainer, she said! The knowledge and skills learnt in the MCE off campus course will help me advance into more senior positions*). She joins previous alumni Melissa Accardi (GRS 2011, MCE 2012) and Vivek Navneet (GRS 2009, MCE 2010), who are also loving working at Boston IVF. Already the 2014 alumni are finding positions, with students now back working in India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Mexico. Our first Icelandic student, Signey Hersisdottir will be starting her embryology career in a prestigious Swedish clinic.

One of our lecturers, Dr Nadine Richings, was visiting Nova IVF in Ahmedabad, India this January, and was surprised to find one of our 2014 graduates, Sayali Palnitkar already working there (see photo).



Nadine Richings, MCE lecturer meets 2014 graduate, Sayali, in Nova IVI in India



International MCE 2014 students graduating in Nova IVI in India



GRS 2014 – On the Healesville sanctuary field trip with Peter, EPRD Director



Duaa, Winter and Sibel (GRS 2013 and MCE 2014) at Healesville Sanctuary

Several students are pursuing research careers; Bridie Shultz (GRS 2013) was accepted into a PhD programme at the University of Queensland, working on koala reproduction. Rashid Aldahhan, a 2013 MCE graduate from Saudi Arabia has embarked in a PhD with Prof David de Kretser at our local research institute MIMR-PHI working on the effect of heat on testicular function, and Eisa al Eisaei (from UEA) recently enrolled for a PhD in the Reproductive and Developmental Sciences Program at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver Canada. In a recent

email to the staff he writes: "I wouldn't have made it to Canada without all your constant help and unlimited support, from teaching the theoretical knowledge and practical skills to writing all the supportive recommendation letters. Also, the reputation of Monash University and the MCE program helps MCE alumni to pursue their academic and career paths anywhere in the world".

Amita Tujta an O&G doctor from India, completed MCE last year and has been admitted to the PhD programme in University of Melbourne.



Presentations

We have had another active year on the conference circuit. Our student project on blastocyst collapse prior to vitrification (Zuzanna Zjeden & Malvika Khanna) continues to peak interest in the industry, with an abstract being accepted for an Oral at the Alpha meeting in Turkey, and a poster at ESHRE, in Germany and another abstract on the effect of VEGF on embryo outgrowths (Rashid Aldahhan and Rachel Thompson) was accepted for a poster at ESHRE. Fabrizio Horta, Hamida Alzobi and Sutthipat Jitananawittaya had their abstract on sperm vitrification accepted for an oral at the ASRM in Hawaii. These projects will be submitted to journals soon.

A big highlight was having 14 students attend the national SIRT meeting in Brisbane (great networking opportunity), and 2 students (Amita Tujeta and Clare Ussher) gave good presentations in the student/early career open session. Congratulations go to Clare for winning the prize for best oral! Clare's swift move from student lab to workplace deserves mention too. She had an interview at the SIRT meeting, and a move across the Nullabour to the Hollywood IVF clinic in Perth a week later! She then juggled off campus learning with her new job for the next 2 months, and still ended up *dux* of the class. Go girl!!

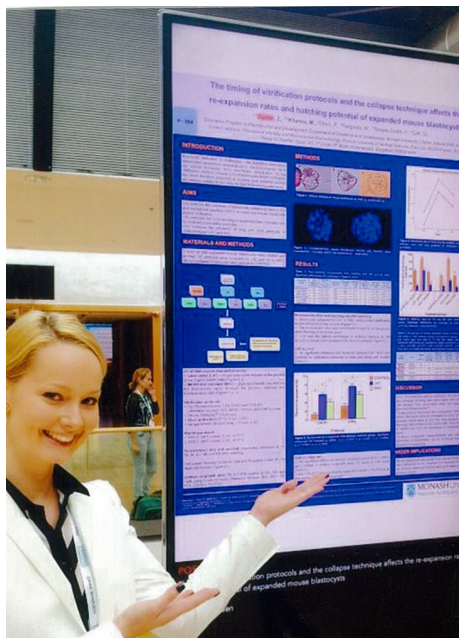
Our new graduate, Dr Keshav Malhorta also moves fast! He returned to his clinic in India in January and 2 weeks later was presenting on vitrification in front of a large audience at the 58th all India congress of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and has since been asked to run vitrification workshops. He states in an email: "Things are moving pretty fast all thanks to the Monash team"



Fabrizio, 2013 student presenting at the ASRM in Hawaii 2014



Keshav presenting at the 58th all India congress in obstetrics and gynaecology Chennai, Jan 2015



Zuzanna presenting at Eshre Germany



Sally Catt (SIRT education coordinator) giving Clare Ussher her student prize at SIRT, august 2014

The lab and student space

We've had a hugely active year in the lab, as usual. A new initiative was microscope training at the beautiful local Olympus training show rooms. With a new ICSI rig from Research Instruments being installed, this gave us the opportunity for increased ICSI training per student: the four machines were being used 9h per day, equating to over 3000 hours of ICSI practice. We could not achieve this without the wonderful support from the various IVF companies particularly The Pipette Company, Cook Medical, Origio, and Gytech who are always willing to donate ex-stock. Also, we have been very lucky with local labs and companies kindly donating their 'just expired' media and vitrification devices to us, proving invaluable for training and during the student projects (notably Genbiomedx,

Cook, Origio, Melbourne CFC, Monash IVF). A compound fluorescence microscope, a timelapse incubator from ESCO (very exciting!) and a MACS sorter- (removing apoptotic sperm) are just a few of the other new additions to the lab this year. A much needed facelift to the student room occurred mid-year, with the couch and orange chairs much approved of by the 2014 cohort.



New equipment :Timelapse incubator



MCE students (Kapil and Florian) ICSI training