CONTINENCE CARE
Improving quality of life for older people.

IDENTIFICATION OF NEED
Loss of bladder control, known as urinary incontinence (UI), is a major problem affecting many people in Australia and worldwide. It is common for older people to experience problems with UI and more than 70% of older people in countries such as USA, Germany, and Australia who live in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) or Nursing Homes experience UI. There is well established evidence that UI impacts on the functional, psychological, social well-being and quality of life of older people and the financial costs of UI for aged and healthcare services are considerable. Despite the significant impacts of UI among an expanding older demographic living in RACFs, it remains poorly assessed and managed.

Simavita, a Sydney based company, established to deliver innovative continence management solutions, has developed the first medical device to improve the efficacy of continence assessments, and thereby continence care. This device has been developed in collaboration with healthcare professionals providing improved quality of life, dignity and grace for older people.

To support changed practices in the Continence Management moving from a manual system to 21st century medical device, Simavita required independent research to support SIM® in the market. This presented a problem.

“As a small and rapidly growing global business, Simavita does not have the significant research resources at its disposal as a larger company might,” said Simavita’s Chief Executive Officer Philippa Lewis.

THE SOLUTION
Dr Ping Yu from University of Wollongong’s School of Information Systems and Technology is an expert in the use of information technology to improve the effectiveness of healthcare and evaluation of health information systems.

The company became aware of Enterprise Connect’s Researchers in Business program that provides funding to help place experts from universities or public research agencies with businesses to develop and implement new commercial ideas. Enterprise Connect provided $50,000, matched by Simavita to engage University of Wollongong researchers, led by Dr Yu to evaluate the product. The researchers conducted two field trials in two aged care facilities and then evaluated the data to validate the efficacy of SIM®.

OUTCOME
Following the validation of its product, Simavita moved quickly to take SIM® to market and it has now been installed in 40 aged care facilities in NSW, Victoria, and Queensland. The company is also planning to install SIM® in facilities across all remaining states and territories, as well as New Zealand, the US and Europe.

The University of Wollongong and Simavita have continued their collaboration through commercial research to further evaluate the predictive ability and outcomes of SIM®. Data collected by Simavita has been analysed by a multi-disciplinary team of researchers including Dr Yu and researchers from the Faculty of Health & Behavioural Sciences. An original research paper prepared in May 2012 reporting the impact of SIM® on continence care in residential aged care homes will be published in a leading nursing journal.