

GIVING STARTUPS A LEG UP

With Zicom Group's support, local startup Biobot Surgical has been able to take its invention to greater heights

Smaller companies are nimble but often lack adequate expertise and experience when it comes to venturing abroad or expanding on a larger scale compared to bigger, more established businesses.

This is why the Committee on the Future Economy (CFE)'s report encourages greater partnership between large and small enterprises, so that both sides can benefit from each other's capabilities and reap mutual benefits.

Zicom Group's investment in a startup is an example of the advantages that such partnerships can bring. In

2010, the precision engineering and manufacturing firm took a chance and invested close to \$5 million in Biobot Surgical, a local medical technology (medtech) startup that was looking to commercialise its product – a surgical robot called iSR'obot Mona Lisa.

The robot is used for prostate cancer biopsies and known for its minimally invasive procedure, high accuracy and lowered risks of infection.

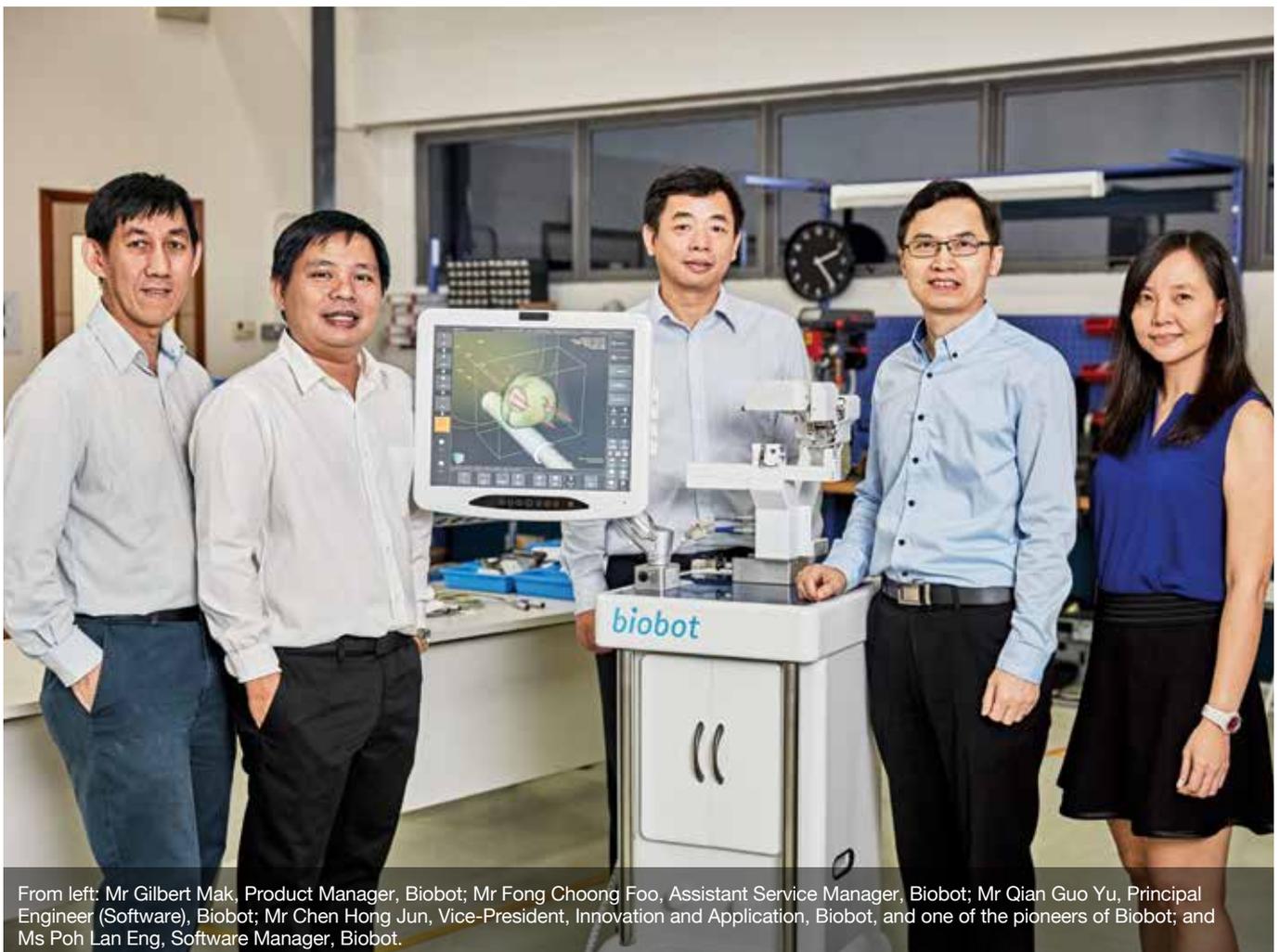
Developed in 2001, the robot is the brainchild of the late Professor Ng Wan Sing of Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Professor Christopher Cheng of Singapore General Hospital

(SGH). In 2007, the late Prof Ng set up Biobot to enable further development and commercialisation of the product.

The product's potential captivated the board of Zicom Group, and was just what Zicom Group needed to move up the value chain. Established in 1978, Zicom Group was keen to evolve from being a manufacturer to a product owner. Zicom Group saw the iSR'obot Mona Lisa as a way to fulfil this aim.

A win-win situation

To ensure the success of the collaboration, Zicom Group identified and employed new talents in the areas of robotics design,



From left: Mr Gilbert Mak, Product Manager, Biobot; Mr Fong Choong Foo, Assistant Service Manager, Biobot; Mr Qian Guo Yu, Principal Engineer (Software), Biobot; Mr Chen Hong Jun, Vice-President, Innovation and Application, Biobot, and one of the pioneers of Biobot; and Ms Poh Lan Eng, Software Manager, Biobot.