

medical image processing, software development and clinical applications.

These new talents were integrated with Zicom Group's core precision engineering and system integration staff, creating a stronger team with a diverse set of skills, talents and experiences. Zicom Group benefitted from the "cross fertilisation" of both companies. For instance, it can use these new skills to develop software architecture for companies that require medical imaging applications or systems.

Zicom Group's move to invest in Biobot was also motivated by a desire to give budding startups a leg up and the means to grow. "We had excellent precision engineering capabilities, which were further strengthened when we provided development and manufacturing support for various multinational companies," Mr Sim Kok Hwee, Zicom Group's Executive Director, explains. "The expertise that we have developed enables us to help home-grown advanced technology companies like Biobot."

The company's efforts to nurture and mentor other companies is what the CFE recommends in its report. In addition, it recommends more smart and patient growth capital – that is, long-term capital that brings along ideas and expertise – to help startups scale up.

As for Biobot (now a subsidiary of Zicom Group), Zicom Group's vote of confidence has brought about numerous benefits.

"Zicom Group has been around for almost 40 years and has built a solid reputation based on trust and integrity. Having its backing and branding have helped boost customer confidence as our customers are more convinced that we can deliver quality products," says Mr Chen Hong Jun (*photo left, second from right*), Vice-President, Innovation and Application, at Biobot and one of the startup's pioneers.

Zicom Group's team of experts in finance, engineering, manufacturing and regulatory affairs, and its strength in developing partnerships and relationships with distributors, mean that Biobot can tap on Zicom Group's wide expertise to scale up and further improve the surgical robot in terms of performance, reliability and user-friendliness.

Biobot, with the help of Zicom Group, has also managed to obtain the CE Marking (which signifies that a product conforms to European Union health and safety standards) and various

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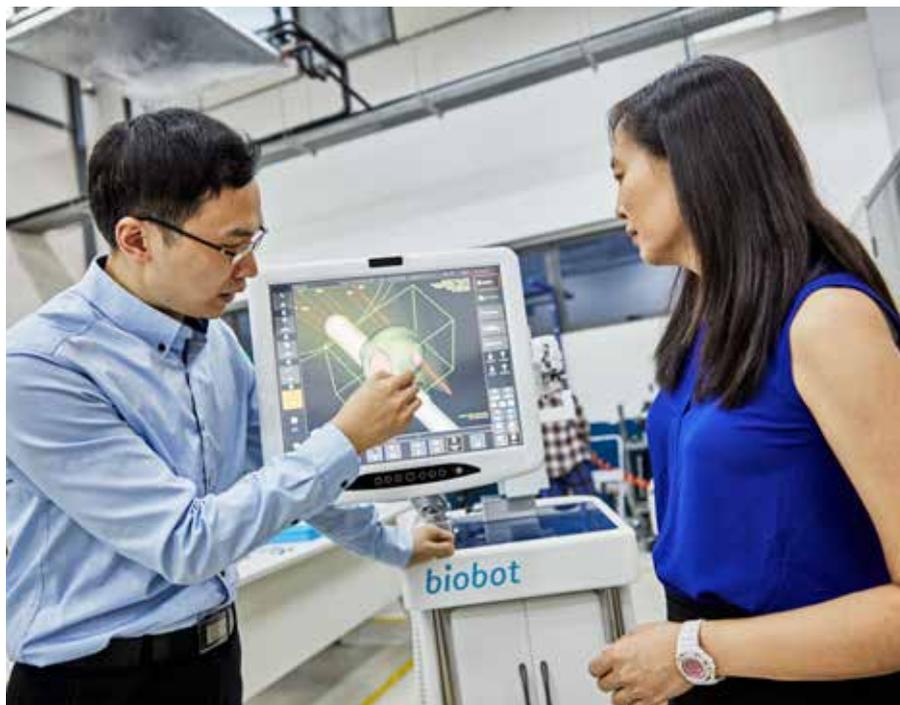
Mr Sim Kok Hwee
Executive Director, Zicom Group

Helping those in need

Mr Sim believes that collaborations between established enterprises and startups are essential, and larger businesses could do more to give their younger counterparts a boost.

"An established company will be able to guide a startup at various milestones, be it designing a product for manufacturability and usability, expanding its supply chain and manufacturing volume, or even negotiating with customers and vendors," Mr Sim adds.

Mr Chen agrees. "Having corporate investment from an established company like Zicom Group creates the buy-in and commitment from the Group's key executives and team. This further enhances the relationship between the two companies."



regulatory approvals for iSR'obot Mona Lisa. This includes regulatory approvals from the United States (US) Food and Drug Administration, Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration and Singapore's Health Sciences Authority.

The iSR'obot Mona Lisa is currently being used in top clinical centres around the world, including the University Hospital of Tuebingen in Germany and Epworth HealthCare Hospital in Australia. Distributors have also been appointed in the key markets of Europe, Southeast Asia and Australia to expand the product's reach.

Moving forward, Biobot is hoping to identify a distributor in the US, and is also exploring venturing into the China market.

The startup is also working on improving its platform to enable the iSR'obot Mona Lisa to deliver treatment for prostate cancer, and accelerate its market expansion.

"If our platform can be used for both biopsy and treatment, the intrinsic value of Biobot would increase and, ultimately, make the company more attractive to investors," says Mr Chen. ■