

## Extreme science experiments for new OU/BBC programme

**THE *Lab Rats* programmes include testing the effects of g-force on the body, sleep deprivation, fear and male fertility. The programmes in order are:**

- *Able-bodied semen* – This programme will inform men about the factors which determine their fertility in a compelling and entertaining way. Sperm racing is a powerful illustration of the characteristics required for fertile semen. Mike and Zeron will actually race their sperm.
- *Fit to fly* – Mike and Zeron ride the centrifugal machine known as the Vomit Comet, plus a ride in stunt airplanes to see how much they can take. It all culminates in a ride for one of them in a US F-16 fighter jet.
- *Up all night* – A lot of road accidents are caused by sleepy drivers; individual sex drives are affected by sleep deprivation; shift workers live an average of seven years less than people with regular sleep patterns.

Mike goes 60 hours without sleep doing tasks with Zeron to compare effects of sleep deprivation.

- *Scaredy rats!* - About five per cent of people will experience anxiety severe enough to interfere with their daily lives. Mike's fear of heights is exposed as he finds himself looking down, way down. Zeron gets up close and personal with his fear: snakes.

*Lab Rats* is not entirely Mike and Zeron. We'll meet the people and the experts involved in each of these areas. And it's not just macho posing, it's science as Mike and Zeron will sometimes compare themselves to a female lab rat for the other side of the story.

*Lab Rats* has a direct relevance to OU courses on human biology, psychology and health issues, and will invite people into web activities and resources hosted by the Open University at <http://www.open2.net>.