Ohio med-device start-ups win grants

Mass Device

By Mary Vanac *[1]*

Two northeast Ohio start-ups that are developing treatments for psoriasis and for people who have trouble swallowing are getting $25,000 grants from the Innovation Fund of the Lorain County Community College Foundation.

Fluence Therapeutics Inc. of Akron, which has licensed photodynamic therapy technology from University Hospitals Case Medical Center in Cleveland, is developing both a drug and a medical device to treat psoriasis. The company will use its grant for three things, CEO Warren Goldenberg said.

On the drug side: "Were going to contract with a formulator in the pharmaceutical industry to do some initial work and to come up with a few different compounds that were going to test," said Goldenberg, a partner at Cleveland law firm Hahn Loeser who also was founding CEO for Cleveland start-up CardioInsight Technologies Inc.

On the device side: "Were talking to vendors now â€¦ to come up with cost estimates and an early design for our device prototype," Goldenberg said. And his company will use some of the money to bring in advisory board members to meet the Fluence Therapeutics team of three, he said.

"We will have to go out and raise more money," Goldenberg said. "To raise that money, we need a much more specific story about what we are going to use the money for. We are going to use this grant to help us come up with a better definition of what our product development plans are going to look like for both the pharmaceutical and the device."

Meanwhile, Dysphagia has developed a neurostimulation device that restores movement to the vocal cords, larynx and trachea to prevent food from getting into the lungs while swallowing. Dysphagia - the medical condition - is difficulty in swallowing caused by neurological conditions, such as stroke or Parkinsons disease, as well as injury.

People who have dysphagia take their lives in their hands to eat or drink, risking death by choking, bacterial pneumonia from food that lodges in the lungs, or eventual malnutrition. Often, patients opt for a feeding tube that deposits food directly into the stomach.

Founded by Dustin Tyler, an associate professor in the biomedical engineering department at Case Western Reserve University, Dysphagia has developed a product that enables patients to eat normally with the help of a neurostimulating device and wire implanted in the trachea. A small sensor in the mouth detects a

"swallow event" and stimulates the throat to close off the airway to protect it from whats being swallowed.

Dysphagia will use its grant to develop a prototype of its technology and for clinical trials, according to the Innovation Fund. Tyler also is associate director of the Cleveland Advanced Platform Technology Center.

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