

*Title: Neotherix Technology Strategy Board Website Article*

## YORK COMPANY TAKES NEXT STEP IN DEVELOPMENT OF SKIN CANCER THERAPY

A consortium of industry experts has won a further grant to develop a novel regenerative medicine product to help repair wounds such as those suffered by skin cancer patients.

EktoTherix™, a bioresorbable “tissue scaffold” material that assists in patient tissue repair and regeneration, has been developed by York based Neotherix Limited supported by Lorien Engineering Solutions and Smith & Nephew.

The treatment provides an aesthetically acceptable repair to the skin. This avoids the need to either graft donor skin tissue from elsewhere on the patient or have an extended healing process with regular dressing changes and repeat visits to the clinic and the accompanying risk of infection. It will benefit the NHS by providing a convenient and cost-effective treatment for dermatologists and surgeons.

The consortium of experts has now secured 50% funding for the £414,000 project from the Technology Strategy Board to take the therapy into the final development stage of clinical trials. This follows an earlier feasibility project grant made to Neotherix by the Board in 2009 and a Developing Therapeutics project grant to the consortium (also by the Board) in 2010.

The EktoTherix™ patch is applied following excision of the basal or squamous cell carcinoma, and this rapidly allows the wound space to be filled with (and then covered by) the patients’ own skin cells. The product is formed via an electrospinning process, and the highly porous scaffold structure supports the migration and proliferation of fibroblast cells from surrounding healthy skin tissue by providing cells with a 3D architecture which facilitates healing of the wound.

Neotherix’ initial clinical target concerns the post-surgical treatment of non-melanoma skin cancers and the repair of other “acute” wounds such as lacerations and surgical wounds. Further clinical applications are currently being explored.

**Dr Mike Raxworthy**, CEO of Neotherix said: “We are delighted and proud to have gained further Technology Strategy Board funding which will move the development of the product towards full commercialisation. This builds on preclinical testing to confirm efficacy and safety, on manufacturing trials and work done to explore the pathway currently followed by a patient with a skin cancer. Our overall aim is obviously to use the EktoTherix™ to help these patients so we are excited to now be in a position to prepare for a clinical trial of the product toward the end of the year, with an estimated market launch in mid 2014.

The estimated global market for this product is over £850m per annum.” East Midlands based Lorien Engineering Solutions is assisting in the programme management and the steps needed for a development product to be

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approved for first in man clinical trials that are scheduled during 2013. In particular, Lorien is leading the work to bring the manufacturing operation to the standards that will be required by regulatory authorities. Lorien's life sciences director **Bill Treddenick** commented: "This new grant award is fantastic news for the project as the product has the potential to greatly improve patient outcomes and reduce public healthcare costs. Lorien is delighted to be part of such a successful consortium of companies working in the regenerative medicine arena, and in particular to be able to continue our involvement with our colleagues at Neotherix and Smith & Nephew following completion of earlier product development."

**Mark Richardson** VP of Research and Technology at Smith & Nephew Advanced Wound Management said "Smith & Nephew has been involved with the development of this technology from its inception so it is rewarding to see this important next step being supported by the TSB".

Commenting on the grant awards for regenerative medicine projects, **Zahid Latif**, Head of Healthcare at the Technology Strategy Board, said: "The UK is a world leader in regenerative medicine, with a strong academic science base and a supportive clinical and regulatory environment. For UK businesses to fulfil their potential in this field, gaining a commercially competitive edge and exploiting promising discoveries, a number of development challenges need to be overcome. This is why we are investing significantly in this area, to underpin and enable the best regenerative medicine businesses in the UK and build a connected regenerative medicine community."

The investment in EktoTherix™ is part of a £21.5m programme of competitions, managed by the Technology Strategy Board, in the area of regenerative medicine. Launched in September 2009, the programme is supported by the Medical Research Council (MRC), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). This final round of investment will support fourteen commercially-focused research and development projects which will receive nearly £8.5 million of government grant award funding. Four projects including EktoTherix, will engage in the development of regenerative medicine therapeutics. Ten of the collaborative projects will address generic challenges in the development of cell based therapies, and will lead to demonstrators with commercial applicability.

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