



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

# news

## **BRCC firm sets milestone, moves to human testing for new drug**

Release #0607-263; April 17, 2007--Contact: Cheryl Roland; (269) 387-8412

KALAMAZOO--Meditrina Pharmaceuticals Inc., a company launched with the assistance of Western Michigan University's Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center, is the first life science startup with local ties to progress to the human testing phase for new drug development.

The Food and Drug Administration has reviewed the company's Investigational New Drug Application--or IND—and allowed the company to begin studies in patients of an oral drug called Femathina. The drug was developed to serve as part of an alternative to surgery for women who suffer from excessive uterine bleeding.

The product works with medical devices already approved by the FDA that “ablate” or destroy the inner lay of uterine cells--the endometrium. Femathina is designed to thin the endometrium, and ultimately make the ablation procedure more successful. If the initial patient studies of Femathina are promising, an additional two to three years of testing will be needed before the results can be submitted to the FDA to receive approval to begin marketing the drug.

The technology was developed by researchers at Wayne State University and licensed to Meditrina. The company, based in Ann Arbor, Mich., draws on the resources of WMU, WSU and former Pfizer scientists in Ann Arbor. Dr. Thomas Collet, the company's co-founder and CEO, is an established Michigan entrepreneur.

Launched in 2006 with support and seed money from WMU's BRCC, Meditrina was a big winner last fall in the second round of 21st Century Jobs Funding announced Oct. 16 by Michigan Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm. Meditrina received \$3.8 million--the largest amount awarded to 24 companies and organizations named to share a total of \$35 million. CEO Collet says the Kalamazoo connection was key to that success and the approval of the IND.

-more-

**(BRCC firm sets milestone, moves to human testing for new drug)--add one**

“WMU’s BRCC was a resource crucial to our success,” Collet says. “The combination of providing clinical and product development expertise as well as offering funding flexibility was critical in getting us to the point of being successful in securing 21st Century Jobs funding. I’ve never seen a public development organization with this kind of expertise and such a successful business development model.”

Dr. Jack Luderer, executive director of the BRCC, is chief medical officer for Meditrina. He says the latest development is evidence that the local and state support to assist startups in the Kalamazoo area is paying off. He says the Meditrina milestone means other local companies will be tapped for support. Innovative Analytics will provide the Meditrina clinical trials with statistical and data management services, while one of the investigative sites for the trials will be Jasper Research Clinic. Both companies were formed in 2003 and have Pfizer Inc. roots. Other local firms involved are Avtech Laboratories, which will provide analytical services, and Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, which will continue to provide legal services.

“We are very appreciative of the support the BRCC has received from the governor, the legislators who helped in its formation, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and Western Michigan University. The success of Meditrina would not have been possible without this help,” Luderer said of the development. “I am so proud of the scientists and entrepreneurs who ‘stuck around’ in Michigan to make this milestone possible.”

The BRCC was founded in 2003 with funding from the Michigan legislature and the University and was charged with using its expertise in pharmaceutical development to grow the life sciences business sector in Michigan. To accomplish its goals, the center provides seed capital for early companies, and center staff members sometimes hold interim management positions in these companies. In exchange, the BRCC receives stock in the new company or a cash payment. The BRCC catalyst funding is often combined with funds from other angel investors or venture capitalists to launch a company and develop a new technology.