

## **Firm with WMU ties gets second-round 21st Century Jobs funding**

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KALAMAZOO--An Ann Arbor area pharmaceutical firm with strong ties to Western Michigan University's Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center is a big winner in the second round of 21st Century Jobs Funding announced Oct. 16 by Michigan Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm.

Meditrina Inc. will receive \$3.8 million--the largest amount awarded to 24 companies and organizations named to share the \$35 million in new funding announced by Granholm. Meditrina is a startup women's health company launched with initial funding from WMU's BRCC and intellectual property discovered at Wayne State University Medical School. The technology is a late-phase pharmaceutical opportunity aimed at developing new uses for an existing class of drugs on the market.

Meditrina's first product is expected to be a drug used to thin uterine linings in women who are about to undergo hysteroscopic surgical procedures--an alternative to a hysterectomy for women with excessive uterine bleeding. According to Dr. Thomas Collet, co-founder and CEO of Meditrina, the company will likely initiate Phase II clinical trials in 2007.

According to Dr. Jack Luderer, executive director of the BRCC and chief medical officer for Meditrina, the company is a cooperative initiative that draws on the resources of WMU, WSU, former Pfizer scientists in Ann Arbor and Collet, who Luderer calls "an established Michigan entrepreneur."

"This is a very exciting opportunity for the BRCC and will represent the first time one of the startup companies we've helped fund is able to initiate clinical studies," Luderer says. "This is a substantial milestone on the path of drug development that could ultimately lead to FDA approval for a new therapy."

Collet credits his firm's collaboration with the BRCC as critical to the success of Meditrina's funding proposal in the 21st Century Jobs Fund competition.

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**(Firm with WMU ties gets second-round 21st Century Jobs funding)--add one**

"Without the BRCC's and Dr. Luderer's early leadership and seed financing, Meditrina may have had to delay its product development plans or look out of state to initiate its operations," he says.

Eric Stief, technology licensing manager at Wayne State, says the promising technology being commercialized by Meditrina was developed by WSU faculty members in collaboration with researchers at Mt. Sinai Hospital, located in Toronto. He says WSU'S relationship with WMU's BRCC and Collet gained momentum when Collet and Luderer began digging deep into technologies available for development at Michigan universities.

"They did an extensive search to uncover the gems that fit the development capabilities they could offer," Stief says. "Thomas Collet's business plan and Jack Luderer's ability to capitalize on opportunities for early funding have really set the stage for success."

In addition to the Meditrina award, WMU is deeply involved in another of the projects that received second-round funding through the 21st Century Jobs Fund. Battle Creek Unlimited received \$430,000 for its Technology Business Accelerator. WMU's College of Aviation is one of BCU's partners in that initiative, and WMU's work in applying simulation technology to the medical industry is one of the prime prospects for assistance through the new business accelerator.

The new 21st Century Jobs Fund awards follow the announcement Sept. 6 of 61 projects funded through the initiative. The \$100 million funding available at that time only supported 61 of 85 highly recommended proposals, so the governor called on the Michigan Strategic Economic Investment and Commercialization Board to allocate additional funds for the remaining 24 top-tier projects. During the first round of funding, more than \$3 million was awarded for efforts at WMU, with additional funding going to projects with strong WMU connections.

The 21st Century Jobs Fund is a \$2 billion, 10-year initiative proposed by Granholm, approved by the Michigan Legislature and administered by the Michigan Economic Development Corp. to accelerate the diversification of Michigan's economy. The commercialization component of the initiative devotes approximately \$800 million for cutting-edge technologies in the targeted business sectors--the life sciences; alternative energy; advanced automotive, manufacturing and materials; and homeland security and defense. The competitive award process was coordinated by the Michigan Strategic Economic Investment and Commercialization Board.