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Kiyatec receiving $200K investment at Clemson Cluster event

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ANDERSON, SC—Kiyatec, a Pendelton, SC, startup developing tests to help companies evaluate experimental drug toxicity or metabolizing problems prior to expensive clinical trials, will receive $200,000 in funding from SC Launch at a special event focused on the “Clemson Cluster” at Anderson, SC today.

Kiyatec is one of 18 Clemson Cluster startups that have either licensed Clemson University intellectual property or are located in university incubator space.

Kiyatec, which won the Five Ventures business plan competition in 2007, received a $25,000 grant from SC Launch that year and $175,000 in seed funding from the organization in 2008.

“We looked at a great idea from a specific 3-D cell culture experiment and recognized its potential as a technology platform for multiple markets,” said David Orr, Kiyatec co-founder and inventor of the company’s technology.

Orr says the company plans to eventually develop a bench-top diagnostic system for the drug discovery market which could translate into potential product applications in regenerative medicine.

“The KIYATEC model is an ideal model of technology transfer for Clemson University and for the State of South Carolina. A Clemson University student (Orr) earning a Ph.D. in bioengineering, invents a technology and upon graduation establishes a South Carolina company to license and take the technology to the marketplace,” said Vincie Albritton, Clemson University Director of Technology Transfer.

In a previous interview, Orr told TechJournal South Kiyatec is developing a unique preclinical drug test using a patent-pending “bioreactor” licensed from Clemson.

“It allows us to culture multiple adult human cell types into a three-dimensional tissue engineered scaffold we can use to test experimental drug compounds,” says Orr.

We’re targeting two areas, first, basic predictive toxicology screening. Is the drug detrimental to the cell lines viability? Then, how cells metabolize the drug, how it’s processed and eliminated,” Orr said.

The company’s technology evolved from work on 3 dimensional cell scaffolds in Clemson’s bioengineering department. Another Clemson researcher, Tom Boland, uses off-the-shelf ink-jet printer technology to “print” live, beating heart cells on a scaffold. That technology could eventually lead to heart tissue repair.

The Clemson Cluster event showcases 17 other companies in addition to Kiyatec. They include:

ABTech, Advanced Photonic Crystals , Anaxtal Silicon, Fast Fetch, Hoowaki, Invenca, Poly-Med, Selah Technologies, SensorTech, Specialty and Custom Fibers, Storm rider, and Tetramer Technologies.

Also at the event, SCRA CEO Bill Mahoney will present a Knowledge Economist award to former Michelin executive Calder Ehrmann. The award will recognize Mr. Ehrmann’s leadership among SCRA Trustees and as a principal of the Riley Institute at Furman University.

Throughout the past 12-18 months, SCRA affiliate SC Launch has provided counsel and support to more than 125 start-ups. The average salary of jobs created to date by these start-ups is $77,000. Additionally, SC Launch!-supported companies have to date secured more than $55 million in follow-on venture capital and private equity financing.