Oregon Bioscience Association

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The Rest of the Story: Oregon Bioscience Association's 2016-'17 Annual Report

OTRADI BIOSCIENCE INCUBATOR CREATES SMART HEALTH ANNEX FOR DIGITAL HEALTH STARTUPS

Dylan Vance and his team at Jupiter Devices have a vision for a commercially successful product that could one day help millions of diabetics receive blood sugar readings in a noninvasive, accurate and efficient way.

But transforming that product vision into commercial success also requires a bold vision of the kind of environment that can bring their idea to reality.

Enter the OTRADI Bioscience Incubator's new Smart Health Annex.

"We were looking for more than just space," said Vance, CEO of Jupiter, the first startup to take up residence at the incubator's digital health themed annex. "We were looking for people who understand not just what it is we're doing, but also how scientific research turns into medical products."

The Smart Health Annex is connected to OTRADI's highly successful Bioscience Incubator (OBI), which now houses a total of 17 bioscience startups in its building at Southwest Macadam Avenue. The complex was initially set-up to offer young bio companies office space, wet-labs and other facilities often financially or logistically out of reach for bio startups.

But as Vance and OTRADI Executive Director Jennifer Fox point out, the need for mentoring and networking is just as vital to Oregon's digital health startups that don't require lab space.

"OTRADI heard from a segment of our bio community working on digital health devices who wanted access to our very robust BioMentoring program and to network with life-sciences companies," says Fox. "Today at the incubator, you might find, for example, a digital startup using data from clinical trials or patient groups of a neighboring bio company here. Digital health startups want to be around like-minded, life sciences companies."

Fox said two digital health startups have already moved into the Smart Health Annex. The annex features two areas of private office space adjacent to a co-working space equipped with several "hot desks" with fiber internet connections. Fox envisions a total of three companies fitting into that space. She says the co-working space is a place to expand for the office tenants, and also exists for other companies that just need a desk and a "place to start."

According to Fox, OTRADI defines digital health businesses eligible for Smart Health Annex space as companies furthering health and wellness by developing new products or health properties in the realm of connected, smart devices interfacing with digital. She said tenant Jupiter Devices serves as a perfect example.

Vance and his Jupiter team are developing a wearable technology that hosts noninvasive (no needles) glucose monitoring technology (think of an Apple Watch continuously reading and storing blood sugar data utilized by diabetics and their health care professionals). The wearable device would use radio frequency (RF) spread spectrum identification to measure glucose levels in the blood in real time. By using RF analysis of molecular structures, the technology Jupiter is developing identifies and measures blood glucose without blood extraction or hypodermic sampling of interstitial fluid.

Fox says just as Jupiter's evolving technology and company can take full advantage of its Portland location near health, software and wearable technology leaders like Intel or Nike, they can also absorb the lessons and experiences of their neighboring peers at the OBI Smart Health Annex. Vance is a fan of the arrangement.

"All the companies within the OBI have experience that's relevant to what we're going through," says the Jupiter CEO. "The companies at the OBI act as resources to one another if there's a question about grant applications, lab equipment or FDA regulations. Having all of that experience just down the hall is priceless."

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