

New breast cancer test could save lives

Submitted by: 2thefore

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A team of researchers at the University of Bristol is developing a revolutionary new test to detect breast cancer at an early stage. If successful, this test will be effective for women of all ages; given that breast cancer is the largest killer of women between the ages of 35-55 in Europe, the test could have a dramatic effect on the number of deaths from this disease.

The test, which utilises an innovative radar system, will enable women to be tested regularly without the fear of over-exposure to radiation, a problem with existing X-ray tests. Currently, in order to detect cancer at an early stage – which is extremely important for successful treatment - many women are dependent on self-examination which can prove unreliable. This latest technology has the ability to image through dense breast tissue, and therefore can reach a far wider section of women than X-ray mammography can.

Women below 50 in particular will benefit from this new test, which is much more reliable than X-rays at detecting cancer in this age group. The test is also a much more comfortable procedure than X-rays since it does not involve compressing the breast between plates. This could encourage many more women to be tested regularly for breast cancer, which, according to Cancer Research UK, is the most common cancer for women in this country.

Alan Preece, Professor of Medical Physics at the University of Bristol and one of the lead scientists on this project, said: "Breast cancer is one of the biggest killers that women currently face. Each year, there are over 41,000 new cases in the UK alone. We are very excited about this new technology and the benefits that might come from its use."

This world-leading research project is funded by the United Bristol Healthcare Trust (UBHT), the University of Bristol's enterprise initiative and the Sulis Seedcorn fund, which recently awarded over £100,000 of venture capital to the project. Commercialisation of the project has been driven by SETsquared, the high-tech support programme for very early stage ventures.

SETsquared is part of the enterprise partnership between the universities of Bath, Bristol, Southampton and Surrey. Based alongside the University's incubation centre at University Gate East, the SETsquared centre in Bristol is actively supporting over 50 nascent entrepreneurs, offering services such as business development, mentoring and cost effective office space.

You can hear the team talking about the project in the next series of BBC Radio 4's "Leading Edge", which is due to air around February or March this year.

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Notes:

This research at the University of Bristol is led by Dr Ian Craddock from the Department of Electrical & Electronic Engineering and Alan Preece, Professor of Medical Physics.

The University of Bristol, as part of its enterprise initiative, provides grant funding at the very early stages of turning research into a business proposition through its Enterprise Development Fund. For further information, see www.bris.ac.uk/research/enterprise/createbusiness/funding/bedf

The Sulis Seedcorn Fund provides support for the early stage commercialisation of research generated by the Universities of Bath, Bristol and Southampton.

The Fund offers resources for targeted development work to enhance the commercial potential of specific products or services as well as for licensing, sale of intellectual property and formation of spin-out companies. For further information, see www.bath.ac.uk/sulis-innovation

For more information, see <http://www.bris.ac.uk/>

For more information, see www.setsquared.co.uk or contact:

2thefore Ltd: Katie King/Glen Goldsmith on 0208 360 2442/01483 811234

Notes to editors:

SETsquared supports early-stage, technology, high growth potential ventures both from within and outside the universities. It helps these ventures make the vital, yet often difficult move from initial ideas to business start-up and the key to its success lies in the combination of the research strength of the universities and private sector commercial experience.

SETsquared provides:

- Business mentoring and guidance – A key part of the support, mentoring is provided by experienced business people and entrepreneurs. Day-to-day guidance comes from the SETsquared team and business partners through review panels, workshops, email and telephone support, advice clinics, online guidance materials and networking activities.
- Support of entrepreneurs and business professionals - SETsquared has developed a support community of business professionals, such as accountants, lawyers and bankers, to provide specialist advice, information and services to new ventures when they need it.
- Centres - low-cost serviced office space in Bath, Bristol, Guildford, Southampton and Swindon.