

Wound repair research gets cash boost

Suzan Uzel

A CONSORTIUM of industry experts has won a grant to continue its development of a regenerative medicine product to help repair wounds such as those suffered by skin cancer patients.

EktoTherix, a bioresorbable 'tissue scaffold' material that helps repair and regenerate patient tissue, has been developed by York-based Neotherix, supported by Lorien Engineering Solutions and Smith & Nephew.

The consortium says that the treatment, which is in the form of a patch, provides "an aesthetically acceptable repair to the skin", avoiding the need to either graft donor skin tissue from elsewhere on the patient or have an extended healing process with regular dressing changes and repeat visits to the clinic as well as the accompanying risk of infection.

Neotherix, which was formed as a spin-out from Smith & Nephew in 2007, achieved an estimated turnover of around £315,000 from 2010-2011. The firm employs three people.

The consortium of experts has now secured half of the funding for the £414,000 project from the Technology Strategy Board to take the therapy into the final development stage of clinical trials. This follows an earlier feasibility project grant made to Neotherix by the board in 2009 and a Developing Therapeutics project grant to the consortium, also by the board, in 2010.

Dr Mike Raxworthy, chief executive of Neotherix, said: "We are delighted and proud to have gained further Technology Strategy Board funding which will move the development of the product towards full commercialisation.

"This builds on preclinical testing to confirm efficacy and safety, on manufacturing trials and work done to explore the pathway currently followed by a patient with a skin cancer.

"Our overall aim is obviously to use the EktoTherix to help these patients, so we are excited to now be in a position to prepare for a clinical trial of the product toward the end of the year, with an estimated market launch in mid 2014.

"The estimated global market for this product is over £850m per annum."

The investment in EktoTherix is part of a £21.5m programme of competitions, managed by the Technology Strategy Board, in the area of regenerative medicine.

Zahid Latif, head of healthcare at the Technology Strategy Board,