

BIOBUSINESS CASE STUDY

NI SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND R&D



PETER DONNELLY

Director, BioBusiness NI

Dr Peter Donnelly is the founder and Director of BioBusiness NI, a business association for the life and health technology sector. He is also the Founding Director of Bluescope Medical Technologies. He holds patents for three different medical devices.

BioBusiness was set up in 2004 when Peter was working with a number of medical device companies as a consultant and recognised the opportunity for greater collaboration in the sector. "I had the chance to not only see the work that these companies were doing, but also some of the great potential they had and it seemed to me there were a lot of benefits to be gained from these companies talking to each other."

After organising a series of successful networking workshops, Peter established BioBusiness and received funding for the association by Invest NI. It now acts as a representative body for the life and health technology sector, supporting knowledge exchange and networking. Its programmes include BioMed Ireland, the first all Ireland biotechnology and health technology programme, and ABC Collaborations, an initiative which encourages and facilitates partnerships between academics, businesses and clinicians.

Peter firmly believes that in his sector, innovation does not only come from the universities, but also from clinicians who are essential for identifying real clinical needs. He is also a champion of the actual companies themselves: "There are over 300 new products under development in our sector and over 300 patents in Northern Ireland. That shows that it's a very dynamic and innovative sector."

Peter can take credit for some of that innovation and dynamism himself. Inspired by characters such as Frank Pantridge, the Northern Ireland inventor of the defibrillator, as well as his own earlier experiences of researching devices for reading multiple foetal heartbeats, Peter went on to develop his own inventions and set up Bluescope Medical Technologies, a manufacturer of respiratory and cardiopulmonary monitoring devices for the hospital and home based market.

Peter sees the development of devices for homebased care for the elderly as one of the most exciting developments in his sector. "Everybody will be able to read their own heartbeat and see what their blood pressure is doing. It will address many problems for old people needing care, not least waiting lists at GP surgeries". However, he acknowledges that it also represents a huge challenge for the sector and will

need significant funding in order for it to work.

Speaking on the work of MATRIX, Peter is passionate about the role it will play in exploiting Northern Ireland's science and R&D resources to the country's economic advantage. "My vision for Northern Ireland is to have a dynamic public sector which can support the industry, with the skills and people necessary to underpin that, as well as a very open and honest engagement between academics, business and government, and an appreciation that everyone stands to gain from this."

Peter's own career choice was influenced at an early age. "My father had always wanted to be an engineer, and while he didn't realise this dream for himself, he focused on achieving it for his children. He convinced me that this would pave the way for a good, professional career."