

Vivo nets \$2M injection for stem cell research

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An infusion of roughly \$2 million and a new international partnership are helping propel Birmingham-based Vivo Biosciences deeper into the stem cell and cancer research industry.

Vivo Biosciences has partnered with Swiss firm Roche Applied Science and its partner ACEA Biosciences in California to develop a 3-D simulation model of stem and cancer cell growth that researchers say makes studying cells more realistic than ever and could lead to drug discovery and development.

Raj Singh, president and CEO of Vivo, said the company has received \$7.5 million in research and development dollars from the National Institutes of Health and NASA since the company's founding in 2004 to develop HuBiogel.

Vivo most recently scored about \$2 million in local venture capital funding via the Birmingham Technology Fund, which is managed by Greer Capital Advisors. The technology fund also recently funded Birmingham-based BioDtech with \$600,000 in venture capital to continue its biomedical research that removes biotoxins from research samples.

Alan Dean, managing partner at Greer Capital, said millions of dollars in grants from the NIH and NASA awarded to Vivo made investment a less risky venture.

Its scientific validation of the technology when (Vivo) can win grants from the government, he said. Those are assessed very carefully for content and have to be worthy of government funding which is a rigorous process.

Dean said government funding is also an attractive indicator for venture capitalists, because it is a previous investment that does not require a return.

The government also does not claim ownership of a company that it has funded with grants, he said.

Its a way to stimulate innovations and the operations of a small technology company, he said. The public pays for these grants with taxes, and we would like the public to see a return on its investment and thats one way to do it to commercialize these products and create jobs.

Vivo Biosciences and partners are going to further develop the xCELLigence System, a real-time cell growth procedure that allows for growth, proliferation and differentiation of various cells in 3-D and closely mimics a human environment.

Ruedi Stoffel, life cycle leader for cellular analysts at Roche Diagnostics, said the Vivo partnership in technology brings an opportunity to further cancer research as well.

Roche Applied Science believes that the combination of its unique cell invasion monitoring technology with a human biomatrix can significantly support and accelerate oncology research in analyzing the invasive potential of tumor cells, he said.

Birmingham's Agenta Biotechnologies also recently won a \$1.1 million grant from the National Institutes of Health and National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research.

[BY: Ben Piper/Staff](#)