

News release

May 28, 2018

Funding to develop technology that will detect prostate cancer earlier

EDMONTON — Alberta Innovates, the Alberta Cancer Foundation and DynaLIFE have joined together to help commercialize Alberta-owned innovations that will detect cancer earlier and improve treatment for Albertans. The challenge was part of Alberta Innovates' Alberta Small Business Innovation and Research Institute (ASBIRI) program and included insight from Alberta Health Services.

"Alberta Innovates is pleased to have played a role in bringing DynaLIFE, the Alberta Cancer Foundation, and Alberta Health Services together to improve diagnostics for prostate cancer in Alberta," says Garth Likes, Director of ASBIRI at Alberta Innovates. "Innovative ways of doing business require outside-the-box thinking and the Alberta Small Business Innovation and Research Initiative program is an example where Alberta-based companies can test their innovations in real-world applications, with the hope of accelerating the innovation into the marketplace--or in this case, into health care."

Nanostics Inc, the first recipient announced in this challenge, is a University of Alberta spin-off company focused on non-invasive diagnostics for prostate cancer. The project being supported will see the commercialization of ClarityDX, a blood test to predict aggressive prostate cancer that was developed with the early investment from Alberta Cancer Foundation donors.

"This project is an example of the ground-breaking research occurring in our health system thanks to partnerships like this one," says Minister of Health Sarah Hoffman. "This new test marks a step forward in prostate cancer diagnosis and exemplifies how innovation and technology enhances patient care and ultimately helps to save lives."

Each year, thousands of Canadian men undergo biopsies to detect prostate cancer and monitor the progression of the disease. Currently, blood PSA levels are used to decide whether men will receive an invasive prostate needle biopsy, which provides a diagnosis but comes with significant discomfort and risk of infection.

A reliable non-invasive test to identify which tumours will become aggressive, would substantially reduce unnecessary biopsies as well as unnecessary surgeries for patients. Early results suggest ClarityDX has the potential to be the most accurate test to diagnose aggressive prostate cancer and in a prospective cohort of 377 Alberta men, its results were 40 per cent better than the PSA.

"We are excited to be partnered with the Alberta Cancer a Foundation, Alberta Innovates and DynaLIFE Medical Labs to validate the utility of ClarityDX to diagnose aggressive prostate cancer and improve patient care in a real world setting" said John Lewis, Chief Executive Officer of Nanostics "The results from our clinical study will be used to secure regulatory approval for ClarityDX, which is required before we can incorporate our test into the prostate cancer clinical care pathway."

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ClarityDX could eventually reduce 40 per cent of unnecessary biopsies in Alberta, representing savings to the system of \$4 million a year and a dramatic impact on the quality of life for men and their families.

“The Alberta Cancer Foundation is pleased to be part of this initiative that recognizes the importance of detecting cancer earlier and improving the chance of treatment success,” says Alberta Cancer Foundation President and CEO, George Andrews. “Our mandate is to deliver impact to Albertans facing cancer—the ultimate goal of this work by Nanostics is to implement this test within the health-care system so Albertans and those around the world can benefit.”

“ClarityDX is a shining example of the health research innovations that are developed every day at the University of Alberta to improve patient care in our province and around the world,” said Richard Fedorak, dean of the U of A’s Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry. “Thanks to our partners and collaborative work, what began as a seed of an idea in a U of A lab now has the potential to both ease suffering and allow health-care providers to detect aggressive prostate cancer with unparalleled accuracy.”

This funding will support the test as it transitions from the research environment to an accredited laboratory, DynaLIFE. Nanostics will receive more than \$1.3 million for this project over the next 24 months, including \$500,000 from Alberta Cancer Foundation donors, \$500,000 from Alberta Innovates and \$305,500 of in-kind service from DynaLIFE.

“DynaLIFE believes that our consolidated and integrated provincial health system is a unique opportunity for technology development and these projects will lead the way in demonstrating a faster and more effective path to clinical delivery in Alberta and the international market,” says DynaLIFE CEO Jason Pincock.”

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Speakers

- MC - George Andrews (President & CEO Alberta Cancer Foundation)
- Garth Likes, Director of Alberta Innovates' Alberta Small Business Innovation and Research Institute program
- DynaLIFE CEO Jason Pincock to speak
- Dr. John Lewis (Nanostics CEO and Frank & Carla Sojonyk Chair in Prostate Cancer Research)
- Prostate cancer survivor Warren Kmicik

