

Grant may aid in cancer detection

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With some illnesses, timing is everything.

Cancer is an insidious, devastating illness that will often prove fatal if not detected and treated as early as possible.

Some forms of cancer, however, are difficult to detect in the earliest stages, even with the latest technology.

But a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration could make force those cancers (and other ailments) out of hiding and into the light where physicians can, hopefully, treat and destroy it before it becomes life threatening.

Central Michigan University, CMU's Research Corporation and Dendritic Nanotechnologies, a CMURC affiliate company, received an \$810,000 SBA grant to help develop dendritic imaging technology that could lead the fight against illnesses such as cervical cancer, said Brent Case, CMURC director of technology business development.

"Research shows that early diagnosis and treatment of cancer and other scanable diseases are critical determinants for successful treatment," said Dr. Robert Berry, DNT's chief executive officer, in a written statement. "This approach should provide the medical community with an enhanced, sensitive, noninvasive diagnostic tool for early detection and monitoring of scanable diseases in patients."

The focus of the year-long research project will be a dendrimer-based contrast agent, using DNT's

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trademarked Priostar dendrimer line, that will "significantly enhance" the ability of magnetic resonance imaging scans (MRI's) to detect cancer cells and tumors and also enable more precise treatments.

The SBA grant is a key tool in that project, Case said.

"This grant will enable more in-depth testing to determine which dendrimer structures are best suited for use as contrast agents," Case said. "DNT has already done some testing on rats and other small animals."

"The target market for this is cervical cancer, which goes undetected quite often or at least is not detected until much later."

Part of the grant money will pay for a \$275,000 electrospray mass spectrometer that will help researchers look at the dendrimers in a way they haven't been able to before, Case said. And the equipment will be available for all CMURC affiliate companies and CMU faculty members even after the project is completed.

"We are purchasing some advanced diagnostic equipment that allows better analysis of dendrimers," Case said, noting that CMURC is handling the financial management of the desk. "We will be able to get some very meaningful research done and also get that equipment that we've been after for three and a half years. We are building the analytical capabilities out here. It will go into our new facility's shared equipment space when that is completed."

While DNT will retain rights to the process and agents, up to a half-dozen CMU faculty members and possibly some of their students will be involved in the project, Case said.