

Cipher Surgical investment provides scope for growth



Pictured above: (l-r) Andrew Newell, Tim Powell, Ian Mackenzie, Piyush Patel and Paul Markgraf

A pioneering invention developed in the Midlands is set to become commonplace in the medical industry after receiving valuable backing from an investment network.

Cipher Surgical, which is based at the University of Warwick Science Park's Venture Centre on Sir William Lyons Road in Coventry, has just secured investment bringing the total raised to date to over £1million for the launch of a new medical product called OpClear.

The revolutionary product has been developed to address a common problem associated with cameras used during stomach surgery or the surrounding abdominal region.

Andrew Newell, managing director of Cipher Surgical, said: "During surgery the view of the small camera inserted into a patient's stomach region often becomes obscured by blood and other debris and previously the surgeon would be forced to remove the camera to clear the obstruction.

"OpClear allows the surgeon to clear the view of the camera at the end of the laparoscope without the need to remove it - this reduces delays, lowering the time under anaesthesia making operations quicker and safer.

Around £100,000 of the investment came from the University of Warwick Science Park's Minerva Business Angel Network with a further £125,000 from Midven, the West Midlands specialist venture capital company, and Newell explained the importance of this type of investment.

"Angel investment is vitally important to start-up businesses like ours as other sources of funding are simply not available anymore," he added.

"This investment will allow us to market the product to the global medical industry and we hope to have it fully launched by 2014."

Cipher Surgical employs five people and moved to the University of Warwick Science Park in January under the Ignite programme, which is designed to support start-up and early stage companies by allowing them to tap into the park's resources and knowledge base.

In the last 12 months the Minerva Business Angel Network, which aims to assist small and medium size businesses with high-growth potential access the funding they need to fulfil their promise, has completed nine investments raising in excess of £2 million funding. Midven, which specialises in funding early stage and growth companies, has co-invested in four of these investments from its Early Advantage fund.

Tim Powell, who heads up Minerva, said: "We are delighted to have been given the opportunity to support Andrew and his team as we believe this product will have major appeal within the medical industry.

"Like all good inventions, it is providing an effective solution to a common problem and it ticked all the right boxes with the investors."

Dr Andrew Muir, investment director at Midven, said "We expect the OpClear to be launched initially in Europe in 2012 but this product has a global market opportunity.

"We like the management team who have substantial experience in this sector, augmented by the complementary skills of one of the business angel investors who has joined the board."