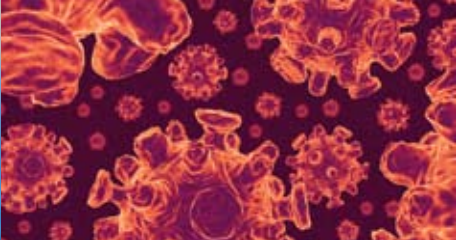


BioAlberta features

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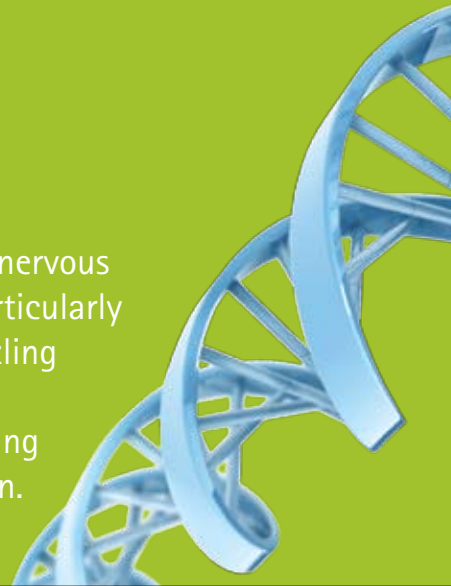


*Cliff Giese and Kevin Giese,
founders of BioMS, surrounded by staff.*



Chances are someone you know has Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

As one of the most common diseases of the central nervous system, it affects 2.5 million people worldwide – particularly those in northern climates like Canada. MS is a puzzling disease in which the body's immune system attacks the fatty sheath that protects nerves (myelin), creating miscommunication between the nerves and the brain.



The result is a flurry of neurological symptoms, including vision problems, muscle weakness, and difficulties with speech and coordination. While sufferers tend to live nearly as long as the general population, the disease is progressive. Many will lose the ability to walk and a considerable number of people with MS will suffer significant emotional and physical consequences.

For many decades researchers have struggled to make sense of the disease and science has yet to produce a cure. But the ability to help sufferers delay the progress of the disease and live more comfortable lives is a realistic goal, at least for Edmonton biotechnology firm BioMS Medical. The University of Alberta spin-off company has been developing a therapy for people with MS since 1999. Now, it is one of Canada's biggest biotechnology firms and is quickly growing.



In 2007, BioMS Medical entered a licensing agreement with global drug company Eli Lilly. BioMS' drug mechanism is a unique one, explains CEO Kevin Giese. "We're using an approach to create tolerance, which involves retraining the immune system to stop attacking the nervous system." The company's main technology, dirucotide, is a synthetic myelin peptide that is intravenously injected every six months.

Giese and his team are hoping the drug yields results that will improve the lives of MS patients. So far, the results have been encouraging. The most recent study, a phase 2 trial for patients with relapse-remitting MS, revealed that the drug is safe and well tolerated. "Many drugs fail because of safety," Giese explains. ▶



Although the development of drugs is an inherently long and complex process, BioMS Medical has realized a number of recent achievements including securing FDA fast track approval. This will potentially help the company get the drug through U.S. regulatory processes and into the hands of patients faster.



Previous studies have shown that dirucotide had an effect on disease progression and Giese is confident the results of upcoming trials will yield positive results. In the second half of 2009, the results of a large Canadian/European study will be released. "It's not very long that investors have to wait," he says.

For its partnership with Eli Lilly, BioMS Medical was recognized in December 2008 with the "Licensing deal of the year award" at the 4th Annual Scrip Awards. In June 2008, the company was recognized as BIOTECCanada's company of the year.

While bringing a novel drug to market is a complex affair, Giese says the company's goals for the immediate future are simple: finish the clinical program, reward its dedicated shareholders, and most importantly, get the drug to the people who need it. "Hopefully, with the success of the clinical program, we'll get this drug to MS patients." ❌

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