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SPIN-OUT

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Intellectual Property UMIP®



CASE STUDY

COMPANY FACTFILE

- > Established in 2015
- > Spin-out company from the Institute of Human Development (MHS) and the Central Manchester Foundation Trust (CMFT)
- > Founded by Dr Tariq Aslam
- > Application: e-health
- > IP: Patent and copyright
- > Funding: Central Manchester Foundation Trust (CMFT), Innovate UK, University Funding

www.clin-e-cal.com



“I wanted to make an impact on patients and patient care - developing the product was only the very first step.”

Dr Tariq Aslam

ABOUT CLIN-E-CAL LTD

Clin-E-cal Ltd, a spin-out company from the University's Institute of Human Development and the Central Manchester Foundation Trust (CMFT) has been incorporated to make rapid social impact through science, technology and clinical research.

As a first product, Dr Tariq Aslam has developed a novel smartphone app - Rafi-tone – which has been designed to help children suffering from asthma take their inhaler with a spacer effectively. Dr Aslam, a consultant ophthalmologist, conceived Rafi-tone in response to his own son's difficulties in taking inhaler medication, but builds on themes developed through his research. Using an existing inhaler training aid the app uses novel algorithms which can help the correct technique to be maintained for each dose of the medication helping to ensure treatment is optimised.

As the company becomes established, Clin-E-cal will develop other technologies consistent with the company's mission to build a portfolio of opportunities.

We met up with Dr Aslam to find out more...

At what point did you realise there could be commercial potential for your discovery?

My research involves a few different avenues of which Rafi-tone is just one of the first products. It wasn't so much that I realised that there could be commercial potential. That wasn't really the spark that happened but it was more that, if the research I was doing was ever going to be of use to people, then it would have to go along a pathway of commercialisation to achieve that final objective of making an impact on the patient and society.

It was slowly dawning on me that developing something was only the very first step, and not necessarily the hardest step, in a long road to actually producing something that was going to be of ultimate value to patients.

How did you find the process of setting up a spin-out and what did you especially value from the University during this process?

The process of setting up a spin-out has been quite complex and, to be honest, at times I did feel my head was spinning-around! I was confronted by a lot of things that I had never come across before because I am an academic, a clinician.

Luckily, I was assigned to UMIP IP Development and Partnering manager, Dr Lizzie Crawford. I was very lucky to have Lizzie as she has been very supportive and has helped guide me through the commercialisation process. Others have also been instrumental namely our lead clinical advisor Clare Murray and lead nursing advisor Margaret Cuffwright. It's all about building successful relationships.

Even if you know a lot about spin-outs, you're still not sure about the company or what it will be and what it will do. The first product is going to be Rafi-tone; we had a product, but knowing who it's for, how we're going to get it to those people and when it's going to be ready is very difficult – as are the legalities.

Did you receive any funding? What was it for?

Yes, I initially received funding from the Hospital Trust and then I've also had funding from the University and Innovate UK which has been essential in starting things off. They've been essential because it's the sort of funding that's difficult to go to external providers for to say: 'I've got this new idea and I'm not really a paediatric ophthalmologist, but can you take a punt please?' So I was very grateful to receive that and I think those pools of money are vital to keep things going.



Correct breathing triggers off a musical note that activates a fun, colourful app

What were your aspirations for the commercialisation process and being involved in the spin-out?

The essential thing that's driving me is the same thing that drove me to go into medicine in the first place, which although it might sound cheesy, is ultimately to make an impact on patients and patient care.

There was nothing that would make me more excited to hear about patients using devices or technologies that I've developed and it having an impact on them. That'd be my dream - to have some letters coming back saying: 'I used this on such and such and it made a real impact.' That would mean that I had developed something that had helped people and I'd done it myself. That's my ultimate aspiration.

How did you find the transition from the academic to the commercial world?

There are some things in the commercial world, which academic life does help equip you for - like planning and organisation and teamwork. There are lots of things which are completely different, completely alien, and I don't think I have transitioned over to the commercial world yet.

My aim is to have these products out there and we're on the pathway to doing that. But my actual plan is to do as little of the commercial stuff as possible and for the company to have an MD to take of that - leaving me to get on with what I do best.

Do you have any advice for those thinking of going down this route?

I think patience is important as is flexibility and having a good mentor. I think those are the three things - somebody you can trust and if you haven't found that person, then there are a lot of people around. And make sure you do it for the right reasons. I think some spin-outs may be something that somebody wants to set up just to make a lot of money, but in my case that's not really the case.

What's next for Clin-E-cal Ltd?

We're planning for a launch of two products - Rafi-tone and following that, a device that will help nurses and health professionals to train other health professionals to show children how to use their inhalers and spacers, which is called the Trainer-tone.

Also, we've got a system of assessing visual fields in children using computer games, which we're hoping to complete validation of in early 2016 and systems to measure visual acuity in older people, which they can use to self-test their visual acuity, which have been validated. And then we're also developing patching treatments for children.





I realised that, if the research I was doing was ever going to be of use to people, then it would have to go along the path of commercialisation.



Dr Tariq Aslam

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