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## UW Startup, Impel NeuroPharma, signs license to commercialize intranasal drug delivery technology to bypass blood-brain barrier

*Team won 2008 UW Business Plan Competition Grand Prize*

**Seattle, WA—June 25, 2009**—UW TechTransfer, the University of Washington organization that facilitates the commercialization of university research, executed a license with UW startup company, Impel NeuroPharma, to develop a **Pressurized Olfactory Delivery (POD) device** that deposits drug in the upper nasal cavity where it is absorbed directly into the brain, bypassing the blood-brain barrier. By providing direct access to the brain, it increases drug effectiveness and reduces toxic side effects from drugs given orally or intravenously, and allows the delivery of biologic drugs that cannot pass the blood brain barrier using current delivery methods. The company plans to market the device to biotech and pharmaceutical companies to treat complications from neurological HIV/AIDS, epilepsy, chronic pain, Alzheimer's disease, and brain cancer.

John Hoekman, a pharmaceuticals PhD student in the UW School of Pharmacy, and Michael Hite, a pharmaceutical professional and graduate of UW Foster School of Business, co-founded Impel NeuroPharma with Dr. Rodney Ho, a professor of Pharmaceutics and an associate dean at the University of Washington. Working with Ho to develop the technology, Hoekman met and partnered with Hite during the UW's Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship's 2008 Business Plan Competition where Impel NeuroPharma won the \$25,000 Grand Prize and \$5000 Best Technology Prize in May 2008. They later went on to participate in the Draper Fisher Jurvetzen Venture Challenge and the Rice University Business Plan competition.

"Impel epitomizes that model of success in our books," commented Linden Rhoads, UW TechTransfer's vice provost. "Securing Technology Gap Innovation Funding from UW TechTransfer to build their prototype, working with our LaunchPad Services group to develop their business, winning the 2008 business plan competition and securing valuable SBIR funding really puts them on the path to success. John and his team maximized every available tool and resource to get them to where they are today with a compelling and novel technology behind them."

Impel recently secured a two-year \$500,000 Small Business Innovation Research grant from the National Institute of Mental Health to evaluate their device for Central Nervous System (CNS) targeted delivery of anti-HIV drugs. Improved treatment of HIV/AIDS has expanded patient life spans, but current anti-HIV drugs do not present a sufficient amount in the brain due to the blood-brain barrier, allowing the virus to reside within the CNS even though it has been substantially suppressed in the rest of the body.

Additionally, current HIV treatments have substantial systemic side effects and may interact with other drug regimens, which may cause patients to discontinue or intermittently use treatment, resulting in sub-optimal therapy.

“The ability to non-invasively bypass the blood-brain barrier will enable the development of many new CNS-therapeutics and significantly improve the lives of patients, said Hite, who is Impel’s CEO. “We are very proud to be working with the University of Washington to commercialize this technology. The support we’ve received from UW TechTransfer, CIE, the Dept. of Pharmaceutics, Milo Gibaldi Endowment and the Foster School has been invaluable in launching our company. Such collaboration among entrepreneurs and researchers is a critical function of public universities and crucial to fostering innovation in Seattle. “

#### **About UW TechTransfer**

Established in 1982, UW TechTransfer facilitates the commercialization of new innovations arising from UW research through the management and licensing of intellectual property. Since the department’s founding, UW TechTransfer has helped create more than 240 companies in Washington state and abroad. In FY08, UW TechTransfer generated \$47 million in total revenue from all sources. Additionally, UW TechTransfer manages a total patent portfolio of over 2,200 issued and pending patents filed in the U.S. and around the world.

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