



## BLUEGRASS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

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### **Biotechnology Company Working on Lower Back Pain Treatment Moves from Austin, Texas to UK's Coldstream Research Campus**

**LEXINGTON Ky. (Sept. 23, 2010)** —Orthopeutics L.P./Intralink Spine Inc., a biotechnology company that is working on an injectable tissue revitalization reagent for the treatment of Degenerative Disc Disease and related lower back pain, has relocated from Texas to the University of Kentucky Coldstream Research Campus. Three employees, including the CEO and the CSO, who will hold a joint UK faculty appointment in engineering and medicine, have moved to Lexington. It is anticipated that additional high-tech positions will be created when the company begins manufacturing the reagent and the medical device.

"It was the eagerness of UK's faculty and leadership team to collaborate in the research and development of this potentially game-changing technology that convinced me to make the University of Kentucky my academic home," said Tom Hedman, Ph.D., an MIT-trained and NIH-funded research associate professor who comes to UK by way of Texas A&M University. Hedman founded Orthopeutics and its spin-off company, Intralink Spine, and serves as the Chief Scientific Officer.

"Dr. Hedman tells me that he is excited to broaden his research efforts in conjunction with our colleges of engineering and medicine and our neurosurgery department," said UK President Lee T. Todd Jr. "Orthopeutics/Intralink Spine aligns perfectly with our focus on medical devices and pharmaceutical manufacturing at Coldstream."

Yesterday Governor Steve Beshear announced that Orthopeutics L.P., parent company of Intralink Spine, will receive an award from the Kentucky SBIR-STTR Matching Funds Program for an NIH SBIR Phase II federal grant. According to Orthopeutics/Intralink Spine CEO and President Eric Hauck, Kentucky's matching funds program for SBIRs and STTRs was the initial impetus to relocate Dr. Hedman's research group from Texas to Kentucky. The company will receive \$408,000 in state matching funds.

Orthopeutics/Intralink Spine is a client of the Bluegrass Business Development Partnership, an economic development initiative between Lexington city government, Commerce Lexington and the University of Kentucky. UK's Office for Commercialization & Economic Development including the Lexington Innovation & Commercialization Center (joint program of the Ky. Dept. of

Commercialization & Innovation and UKCED) and Commerce Lexington started working with Orthopeutics/Intralink at the beginning of the year to find a location in Lexington, make connections at UK, and work with the state Economic Development Cabinet on funding sources.

Mayor Jim Newberry said, "Today's announcement is a clear illustration of what can happen when we connect UK brainpower and economic development. As many of you know, our Bluegrass Business Development Partnership is designed to make that connection. It is the combined effort of Commerce Lexington, the university and the city. By focusing on the horse, healthcare and high-tech industries that partnership has brought more than 3,000 jobs to our community since 2007."

"Commerce Lexington has thoroughly enjoyed working with Orthopeutics on their relocation to Lexington," said Bob Quick, President and CEO, Commerce Lexington Inc. "We have seen an increase in technology companies considering Lexington for relocations because of our educated workforce, low cost of doing business, and strong partnerships with the University of Kentucky and the city of Lexington. We are excited to welcome Orthopeutics to Lexington!"

Dr. Hedman and his research team have already shown that their therapeutic tissue revitalization agent acts almost immediately, is long lasting, and produces a wide range of positive effects including increasing tissue strength, tear resistance, and durability, as well as stabilizing joints, and improving nutritional flow through biologically harsh environments.

"Our nonsurgical, novel biomimetic approach replicates the human body's natural response to stabilize and prevent degradation of certain load supporting tissues," said Hedman. "Other than the spinal disc, candidate tissues include the knee meniscus, the larynx and soft palate, and the stifle joint of the horse."

"The next steps will be to prepare for clinical trials and work with Dr. Tibbs at UK on refining our delivery protocols," said Hedman. Phillip Tibbs, M.D. is the chair of UK's Department of Neurosurgery and a professor of neurosurgery and physical medicine and rehabilitation. Hedman, whose primary UK appointment is as a Research Associate Professor in Biomedical Engineering, has a joint appointment in neurosurgery.

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**Note:** The third Orthopeutics/Intralink Spine employee that moved to Lexington is Paul Slusarewicz, Ph.D., Biochemistry Program Director.

### **Back pain statistics**

- More than 15 million people per year in the U.S. could receive from this treatment
- Low back pain (LBP) costs nearly \$100 billion annually in the U.S.
- 85 percent of adults experience LBP during their lifetime, 37 percent are experiencing back pain at any given time
- 20 percent of LBP sufferers describe pain as severe or disabling
- LBP is the second most common reason for seeing a physician, third most common reason for surgery