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Calgary biotech innovators win 2015 Manning Foundation Award for low-cost hospital hygiene solution

Calgary, AB (October 1, 2015) – Fabrizio Chiacchia and Iwain Lam, of Calgary-based biotech company Surface Medical Inc., have won a 2015 Ernest C. Manning Foundation Innovation Award for developing and successfully commercializing CleanPatch®, a medical product that works much like a Band-Aid to repair damage in hospital beds, preventing the spread of infection while saving healthcare facilities money to prematurely replace damaged equipment.

The Innovation Award is one of several the Ernest C. Manning Awards Foundation gives annually to talented Canadian innovators who are improving the lives of Canadians and others worldwide through their commercialized innovations. Mr. Chiacchia and Mr. Lam will receive the award, which comes with a \$10K cash prize, at the Foundation's 34th Innovation Awards Gala in Saskatoon on October 2, 2015.

“The Foundation is helping to build a culture of innovation in Canada by recognizing Canadian innovators” says President Jennifer Diakiw. “Our awards reward innovators for the value they are adding to our provincial and national economies by creating jobs and wealth, and positioning our country as a global competitor. We consider them Canada's most valuable resource.”

Health Canada estimates that 220,000 people a year pick up infections at healthcare facilities. Hospital-acquired infections (HAI) are responsible for as many as 12,000 deaths and \$1 billion in health-care costs annually. Mr. Chiacchia, who has a background in business and biotechnology, became aware of the problem when a relative told him about a discussion with his chiropractor about the high costs to replace a damaged treatment table.

Mr. Chiacchia's initial research found that 47 percent of beds in one healthcare facility alone had damage and a number of them had a pathogen that could cause a hospital-acquired infection. He formed Surface Medical Inc. with several partners to address the problem and hired Iwain Lam to help with product development.

“There's good evidence that shows that damaged or contaminated mattresses result in the transmission of disease. The medical literature goes even further to show that if you can replace or restore those surfaces to an intact state, then you can actually stop an outbreak or reduce the transmission of those diseases. The reality is that buying new mattresses every time there is damage is not viable with current healthcare budgets,” says Mr. Chiacchia

The pair worked through hundreds of prototypes of varying materials to develop CleanPatch, an adhesive film designed as a preventative, early-stage maintenance tool that can be easily applied to torn mattresses and stretchers to extend their use and prevent contamination. CleanPatches are priced at roughly a twentieth of the cost of a new mattress and are now being used by hundreds of hospitals in seven countries.

Mr. Lam says that, despite the success of CleanPatch, winning the Manning Award was a surprise.

“It is a tremendous honour to get this national recognition, especially when you consider the past winners who have accomplished so much. The award helps us to continue to build credibility for what we are doing which is developing products that make a difference. A lot of people have good ideas, but actually executing them, takes work, takes risk and we have been fortunate to have support along the way,” says Mr. Lam, adding that he and Mr. Chiacchia hope CleanPatch is only the first in a long line of affordable products developed by Surface Medical to help to reduce hospital-acquired infections.



*The Ernest C. Manning Awards Foundation was established in 1980 when Alberta Energy Company CEO David Mitchell collaborated with former Alberta premier Ernest C. Manning to build a foundation to recognize and celebrate Canadian innovators of all ages and across all disciplines. Since then, the Foundation has built a national network of 3,000 young and adult innovators, and awarded innovation prizes to 255 Canadians who have demonstrated innovative talent in developing and successfully marketing a new concept, process or procedure. **For more information, including the full list of 2015 Innovation Award winners, visit: www.manningawards.ca.***

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