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BRISBANE BIOTECH FIRM SETS SIGHT ON US LISTING

A BRISBANE-BORN BIOTECH COMPANY, WHICH HOPES TO USE PRINTING TECHNOLOGY TO REVOLUTIONISE THE WAY MEDICINES ARE DELIVERED, IS SETTING ITS SIGHTS ON A POSSIBLE US LISTING.

Vapotronics has launched a \$10 million capital raising to develop its patented digital micro-droplet inhaler, which will deliver drugs such as insulin deep into the lungs.

The inhaler, based on thermal inkjet printer technology, is the brainchild of Robert Voges, who set up Vapotronics in 1993 after becoming frustrated with having to deal with people smoking indoors.

Vapotronics vice-president business development, Ray Weekes, said the inhaler could be used to deliver nicotine to smokers without the dangers associated with cigarettes or be used to gradually lower doses for those wanting to quit.

Mr Weekes, a former head of Castlemaine Perkins who joined Vapotronics in 1997, said the inhaler could also deliver a range of other drugs and medicines.

"It has the potential to change the lives of diabetics and provide welcome relief for children needing regular injections of insulin and growth hormones and for women on fertility treatment," Mr Weekes said.

He said the company was aware it faced competition from other inhaler products either on the market or about to be launched, but said the Vapotronics inhaler was a "next generation technology".

"The breath-activated inhaler is compact enough to fit in a pocket or a purse," he said.

The company moved its head office to San Diego in January this year to take advantage of the commercialisation opportunities in the giant US market.



But it is maintaining pharmaceutical research operations in Australia through partnerships with the University of Queensland as well as the universities of NSW and Sydney.

Mr Weekes said previous capital raising had sparked a dramatic increase in the size of the company.

"When we started raising capital in 1998, we had a market capitalisation of \$12 million. Based on this latest capital raising, the company will have grown to a market capitalisation of \$200 million."

Photograph caption: Ray Weeks with new drug inhaler at Queensland University... 'it has the potential to change the lives of diabetics'.

Article by: Ian McGoldrick

Photography by: Graham Hutton

Vapotronics head of pharmaceutical development Dr Wolf Hanisch said deep inhalation of drugs offered many benefits.

"Inhaled aerosols have a rapid therapeutic effect and are painless to use," Dr Hanisch said.

"It will be at least three to five years before the technology can be brought to the market but we are on track and our trials are showing positive results."

Shares will be issued at \$1 each through a prospectus which describes the project as long term and high-risk.

The prospectus will be available from Vapotronics Queensland Clunies Ross Centre at Brisbane Technology Park.