

# TO MARKET, TO MARKET

## SRI DELIVERS THE BENEFITS OF ITS RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT TO THE WORLD THROUGH A DEDICATED FOCUS ON COMMERCIALIZATION



DR. STUART FOSTER AND TOM LITTLE, PRESIDENT AND CEO, VISUALSONICS

Commercialization is an important part of research at Sunnybrook Research Institute (SRI), driven by a straightforward aim: to bring research breakthroughs to patients. Commercialization at SRI is focused primarily on clinical trials, technology transfer, venture capital and industry partnerships.

Clinical trials are fundamental to the work of researchers at SRI. They are the means by which researchers test new drugs and devices with a view to their eventual unveiling at the clinical level. The research ethics board at SRI reviews some 500 clinical trials protocols every year, and then monitors the trials as they unfold. When the results from this research are translated into the clinic, the net benefit is safer, more effective patient care and evidence-based practices and policies.

Technology transfer is a process that identifies, explores and develops strategies to take promising research to the market. Researchers at SRI are heavily involved in technology transfer that is focused on making drugs and technologies better. Recent success stories include the formation of spin-off companies VisualSonics Inc. and Sentinelle Medical Inc., which emerged from the research of senior scientists Drs. Stuart Foster and Donald Plewes, respectively.

Sunnybrook Research Institute retains the University of Toronto to direct its technology transfer activities through Innovations at U of T (IUT), whose representatives, dually versed in commercialization and science (a unique distinction at Sunnybrook), provide on-site experts who are available to discuss ideas and help scientists to navigate the process.

For too long, Ontario researchers were challenged by the absence of the capital they needed to take ideas to the next stage, owing to the perceived high risk associated with these ventures in Canada. In 1998, Sunnybrook registered Ontario's first community small business investment fund (CSBIF) with the provincial government's CSBIF program. That injection provided early-stage money for the first generation of SRI spin-off companies. The research institute has two CSBIFs: the Sunnybrook Working Ventures Medical Breakthrough Fund and the Medical Ventures Fund.

The funds—which are committed to enhancing Canada's research and development infrastructure, and contributing to high-quality medical entrepreneurship in Canada—offer access to professionals with extensive knowledge and experience in science, technology and business development.

Increasingly, research institutes are partnering with companies in joint research endeavours. Sunnybrook Research Institute was one of the first to venture down this road and today participates in many such partnerships. Some of our industrial partners are Amgen, Apotex Inc., Bristol-Myers Squibb, Elan Pharmaceutical, Elastin Specialties,

Exact Sciences Corp., GE Healthcare, Novartis Pharma Canada Inc., Pfizer Canada Inc., PRA International, Ortho Biotech, Quintiles Canada Inc., Rimon Therapeutics, sanofi pasteur, Siemens and Zoll Medical Corp.

Indeed, sanofi pasteur has located the world headquarters of its cancer vaccine program here, across 40,000 square feet at the research institute. As part of this, the company formed the Pan-Canadian Cancer Vaccine Network to fund different academic centres for cancer vaccine research; SRI is the largest single site of the Pan-Canadian program.

Moreover, SRI has been instrumental in helping to form strategic alliances to help commercialize Canadian technology. It is a founding member of Yorkbiotech and BioDiscovery Toronto. It also holds several commercialization-specific grants. And just this past year, it formed a partnership with Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre to form the Molecular Medicine Research Centre. The objective of these types of initiatives is to form alliances and partnerships to amass the needed expertise to develop and market new Canadian intellectual property.