

New life science firm makes commitment to Kalamazoo

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KALAMAZOO--A life science startup with a patented product designed for clinical research is moving its operations to Kalamazoo with funding support from Western Michigan University's Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center and Michigan's Technology Tri-Corridor.

Komodo Pharmaceutical Services, LLC, will occupy more than 10,000 square feet in the Kalamazoo Business Park, located on East ML Avenue just east of Sprinkle Road. The company expects to complete its move in August.

Announcement of the company's commitment to Kalamazoo was made June 22 by WMU President Judith I. Bailey during a Kalamazoo luncheon held to launch Southwest Michigan First's Business Catalyst Awards. Dr. Manley Paulos, chief executive officer of Komodo, was on hand for the announcement.

"We are excited to have found a home for Komodo here in southwest Michigan where we can be part of the cluster of biotech startups that have also settled in the area," said Paulos. "Komodo is really a service provider, and that makes us a good fit with the 'virtual drug company' model in the community."

The primary goal of Komodo is the manufacture and distribution of CapTab (Trademark) capsules for use by clinical research operations in the pharmaceutical industry. The patented product is a tablet-shaped gelatin capsule, used to disguise research medications, and is particularly effective for blinded studies comparing new medication to either a placebo or comparative product. Since the two-piece gelatin capsule is tablet-shaped, it can encapsulate solid dose medications of all sizes. Compared to other methods of disguising tablets for research, CapTab reduces the number of doses required for patients in clinical studies, lowers the cost of clinical studies, and significantly reduces the time required for completion of clinical trials. These advantages result in faster approval for new medications.

Komodo has a commitment of \$800,000 in financing through Michigan's Technology Tri-Corridor and a \$250,000 BRCC commitment based on achievement of a series of milestones. The BRCC invested in Komodo because of the value of the technology and its potential for use in clinical studies by the pharmaceutical industry, by academic researchers and by government organizations, said Bailey.

"Komodo adds a needed expertise to the cluster of biotechnology companies in southwest Michigan," she said. "The fact that Komodo received funding from the highly competitive Technology Tri-Corridor funding initiative also encouraged us to invest."

Dr. Jack Luderer, executive director of the BRCC, pointed out the economic benefits for the region if Komodo is successful.

"Komodo could well grow into a company with the need for highly skilled manufacturing and packaging jobs similar to some of the Kalamazoo positions now being eliminated by Pfizer's corporate changes," Luderer said. "We're really pleased to put the BRCC's support behind this kind of economic development potential."