Revolution in casting

Onbone Ltd, the developer of the all natural casting technology material, Woodcast®, is in the process of further expanding and internationalising its sales network for its suite of casting and splinting products. The products improve the clinical care of patients whilst reducing cost for hospitals and lowering the environmental impact of current technologies. They are ecological, user-friendly and applicable for all orthopaedic and traumatology uses explains Stuart Ashman, CEO at Onbone.

The roots of the composite Woodcast material originate from the Department of Chemistry at the University of Helsinki. The company has over the years tweaked the casting technology and is now ready to commercialise it on a grander scale. Mr. Ashman was recently brought in by lead investor MVM Life Science Partners to facilitate this process. "I was initially engaged by MVM to evaluate the technology as part of the due diligence process," he explains. "I've been active in the casting and splinting industry for almost all of my professional life, working for Smith & Nephew. So I know there hasn't been much innovation in this space, not for decades. I believe Onbone has the potential to bring about real change."

Plaster of Paris and (synthetic) fibrecast are the two most widely used casting materials right now, but Mr. Ashman argues that Woodcast is superior to them both. "Our material is 100% natural, ecologically friendly and biodegradable. It also is very light, which makes it particularly suitable for children, and for the ageing population as it puts less pressure on their limbs. A very practical benefit is that Woodcast is waterproof: you can take a shower or even swim with it." Of high value to medical professionals is the fact that the material is translucent, he adds. "Conventional casts have to be taken off for an X-Ray, which is impractical and highly uncomfortable for the patient. With our material, the cast can stay on." The new fracture treatment product concept consists of a selection of wood composite casts and a heating device, which helps to soften the material. The mounting of the cast is simple, fast, clean and safe. Thanks to its thermoplastic material the cast softens when heated, which makes it very easy to bend and mould. It can be used without water or rubber gloves.

Woodcast has already been launched in several EU territories, with >30,000 patients successfully treated. The company now aims to expand to the wider global market. Mr. Ashman believes that their patent protected technology has the features set to achieve a significant share of the cast product market in the big five EU countries and the United States. "Our products are currently available in the Nordics, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. We'll continue to expand country by country."

Onbone is backed by global venture capital investment company MVM Life Science Partners, by Finnish Industry Investment Ltd, a group of private Finnish investors, and by Inveni Capital.

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