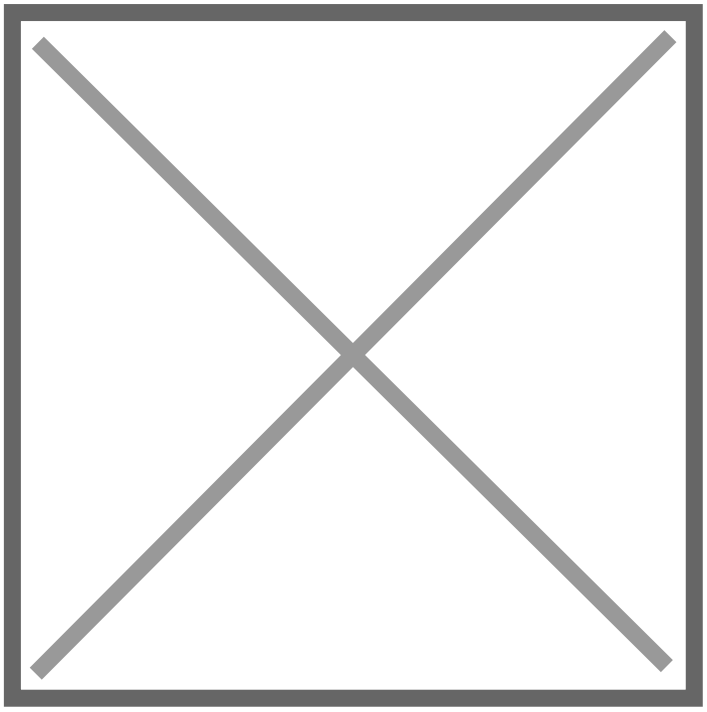
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## Genuine center of excellence

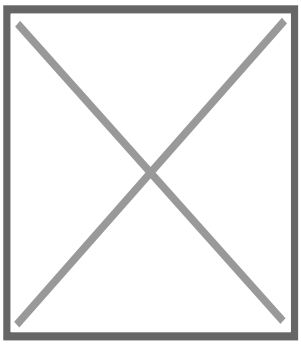
17 March 2004 | News



**Scotland**

## Genuine center of excellence

***The birth of Dolly, the sheep, elevated the profile of Scottish biotech in a big way.***

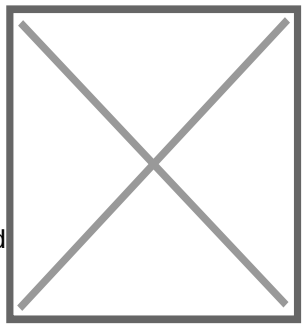


This is one region where scientists are very respected and biotechnology is well spread and understood. A lot has been done by the Scottish Enterprise to promote biotech. Kevin Bazley, deputy director, Scottish Enterprise Biotechnology Group, said, Ã¢â?¬Å?We operate the Taxi Driver test.Ã¢â?¬? The taxi drivers know and understand biotech. In fact, this is the region, which has maturity for the biotech business. Scottish Enterprise is Scotland's main economic development agency, funded by the Scottish Executive.

Scottish Enterprise has a life sciences team to help people in the sector, access finance to start and grow businesses, get business support, establish international connections, improve skills, and strengthen networks. Its international arm is Scottish Development International, which is jointly funded by Enterprise and the Scottish government, looks at inspiring international companies to tap the Scottish potential. In deed, the Enterprise is one of the earliest regional developmental agencies to have focused on life sciences as early as in 1994. Besides promotion, the agency also has funded in companies, which again is unique.

So where is the biotech sector located? Informed Lezley Ward, executive, Trade-Life sciences, Ã¢â?¬Å?Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow form the research triangle of Scotland. According to Bazley, Ã¢â?¬Å?There are five lead markets in the sector: therapeutics, veterinary, agriculture, environmental, and diagnostics.Ã¢â?¬? The companies from this region are spread across various areas of biotechnology. These include drug discovery, biomanufacturing, bioinformatics/genomics/proteomics, clinical/non clinical research, regulatory compliance, contract research, and product development. Added Bazley, Ã¢â?¬Å?Since 1999, the number of companies in the sector has grown by an average of 28 percent every year. (The European average is 15 per cent.) In 2002, 13 new core life sciences companies were formed in Scotland. There are over 420 organizations in Scotland's life sciences community, employing over 25,000 people. Scotland is now home to 20 percent of the UK's life sciences companies,Ã¢â?¬? informed Bazley.

Over 50 academic institutions and 80 companies are engaged in drug discovery. There are more than 100 Scottish-based medical devices companies. Scotland has 50 percent of the UK industry's manufacturing facilities. There are over 200 Scottish-based contract research organizations. Scottish researchers work in many areas, from developing new therapies for cancer and heart disease, through to understanding the causes of Alzheimer's disease. For example Axis Shield works in cardiovascular risk, infectious disease, and autoimmune diagnostics; Biovation on human mAbs; Cyclacel in novel cancer therapeutics; Haptogen in antibody engineering in drug discovery; Q-One Biotech in viral safety testing (acquired by Bioreliance). These are just few examples. Added Bazley, Ã¢â?¬Å?Scotland has more clinical trials organizations than elsewhere in the UK. We also have a strong base of medical diagnostics companies.



Availability of skilled resources has been the major reason for the development of the sector. Education is imparted across the full range of life science and medical disciplines. Fueling all this is the rich education and research base. Ã¢â?¬Å?In 1470, Scotland witnessed the first medical surgery, but it was after the birth of Dolly, the world's first cloned sheep, in Scotland in 1996, Scotland got recognized,Ã¢â?¬? told Bazley. It has 50 odd university departments and institutes doing biotech research. Leading cancer research is happening at Cancer Research UK Beatson Laboratories, Glasgow, and Dundee University. Edinburgh has a large number of clinical scientists and researchers. The Roslin Institute, where Dolly was born, is the most famous one in the region and is involved in genomics and bioinformatics. Clearly on strength of all these, Scotland is moving up the value chain.  It is there from discovery to development to delivery to manufacture. It would also lead the stem cell research activity.