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Mission: Creating novel tissue engineering techniques

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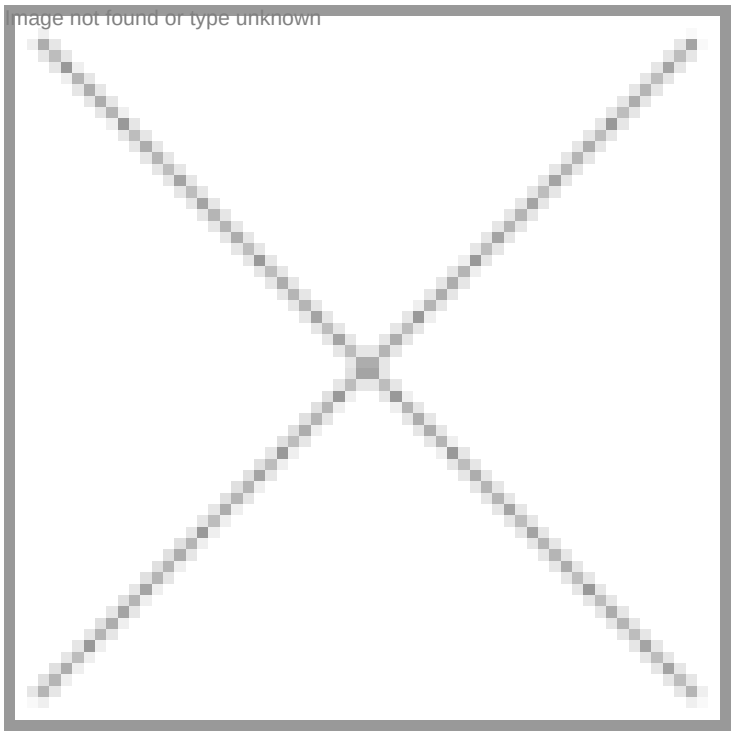
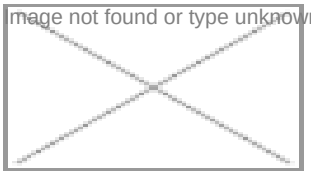
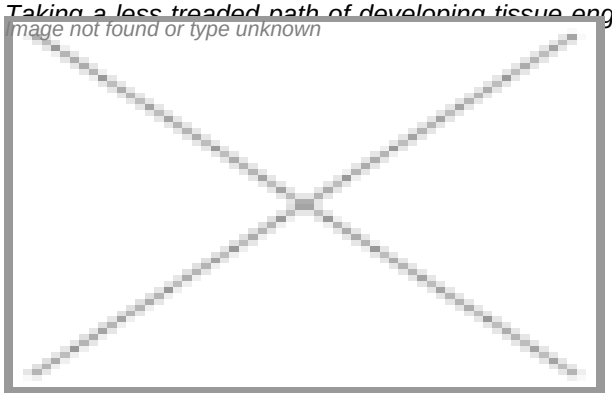




Taking a less treaded path of developing tissue engineering products, ExCel Matrix utilized PPP with NII and DBT to fuel its



Established in 2004-05, Hyderabad-based ExCel Matrix Biological Devices aimed at commercializing technology developed by its founder scientist and CEO, Dr Aroop Kumar Dutta. Leveraging from various funding schemes of government, the company has been developing innovative technologies to facilitate research in 3D cell culture for regenerative medicine and tissue engineering. These technologies have many applications in research and development, pharmaceutical research and regenerative medicine. ExCel Matrix is the first 'tissue engineering' company in India, and is focused at proprietary technology-based product and commercialization strategies. In 2006, it generated enough data for 'proof-of-concept' to have the attention of Small Business Innovation Research Initiative (SBIRI) of the Department of Biotechnology's (DBT) Apex

Committee. The company proved itself promising and was consequently awarded significant funding by SBIRI for its project on novel tissue engineering and 3D cell culture technology. Hitherto, it has received funds amounting $200,000 (~ 91 lakh). National Institute of Immunology (NII), New Delhi, that originally developed intellectual property along with ExCel Matrix, is a partner in this project.

Dr Dutta has acknowledged the exceptional cooperation that his company has received from the NII, even outside the scope of project without which, he believes, they would not have succeeded in their ambitious target. â€œI believe, lack of such grass-root level public-private partnership have derailed entire projects in the past,â€? says Dr Dutta.

Since the company consciously bets on this little understood technology and business, it has not been easy to raise funds like current stem cells-related business modalities. Being an early player in this segment, the company faced difficulties such as lack of mentoring, and unavailability of trained manpower.

Besides SBIRI, the company has raised funds from various government agencies like Technopreneur Promotion Program (TePP) of Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) to support its R&D and seeking additional support to bring its technologies to market. ExCel Matrix has collaboration with National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad, as well.

Way Forward: ExCel Matrix has shown serious commitment towards development of regenerative medicine-based therapeutic products. The company is working towards therapeutic solutions, such as wound healing tissue engineered skin and tissue engineered cartilage. In addition to these commercial targets, the company is exploring the novel applications of ECM Analog technology at research level.

Rahul Koul in New Delhi