

FAU OKs company to sell cancer therapy

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Florida Atlantic University said it has reached an exclusive license agreement with **CHS Resources LLC** for a cancer therapy that emerged from the university's Center of Excellence in Biomedical and Marine Biotechnology.

CHS Resources is to develop and ultimately commercialize the patent-pending technology for skin cancer, FAU said.

Larry F. Lemanski, FAU vice president for research, said the university expects a broad range of cancer patients may benefit from the therapeutic approach,

The Boca Raton-based university said the technology was discovered by Herbert Weissbach, director of the Center for Molecular Biology and Biotechnology and professor at FAU's Charles E. Schmidt College of Science, with colleagues at the university.

Initial experiments in Weissbach's laboratory were attempting to determine if cells could be protected from oxidative damage, which is cell damage caused by oxidants or chemicals that capture electrons from other substances.

What the university said Weissbach and other FAU researchers serendipitously discovered was a novel combination of agents that synergistically and selectively work to target and kill cancer cells while preserving normal cells.

To examine whether this biological effect was a general phenomenon with cancer cells, the university said Weissbach and his team conducted additional experiments with lung cancer cells, colon cancer cells, skin cancer cells and a melanoma cell line.

FAU said results of those experiments showed all of the cancer cell lines used exhibited a similar response of enhanced killing of cancer cells, but normal cells were not affected.

"While cancer represents a collection of distinct diseases, oxidative damage stands out as one of the most likely culprits for cellular damage and therefore may be a major contributor to many cancers," Weissbach said. "Furthermore, recent scientific studies suggest that malignant cells have a different response to oxidative stress than normal cells. Our team has identified a lead compound that in combination with an oxidizing agent or agent that generates reactive oxygen species (ROS) preferentially targets and kills cancer cells."

Based on their findings, FAU said Weissbach and his team have formulated a topical skin preparation for CHS Resources.

That preparation is being tested for actinic keratoses (pre-cancerous skin growth) in a clinical trial under way at the [University of Alabama's](#) Department of Dermatology, FAU said.

In addition to the clinical trial, the university said Weissbach and his team are conducting ongoing research to determine their formulation's mechanisms of action and are designing and synthesizing derivatives of the formulation as potential anti-cancer agents.

"A major focus of our next-generation therapy is to develop a selective, targeted therapy that only affects the cancer and does not damage healthy cells throughout the body," Weissbach said. "A key area of our current research is the discovery of new anti-cancer agents that exploit unique properties of tumors that induce or modulate apoptosis, which is the selective and premature death of cancer cells."

FAU researchers are to continue to conduct scientific studies related to the research project. CHS Resources is to pursue business and commercialization opportunities.

David Gury, executive committee and board member of [BioFlorida](#) and chairman of FAU's Charles E. Schmidt College of Science advisory board, said technology coming out of FAU's three-year-old Center of Excellence in Biomedical and Marine Biotechnology will continue the process of developing high-wage and high-skill employment opportunities in the state. He pointed out such academic-to-business translation was the basis for establishing such centers.

CHS Resources' founding members are Stephen Chakoff and Elliot Hahn.

Chakoff has been involved in the medical device industry for more than 30 years, with background and experience in corporate management, product development, regulatory affairs and sales and marketing.

Hahn is chairman emeritus of [Andrx Corp.](#), which is in the [process of being bought](#) by [Watson Pharmaceuticals](#) for \$1.9 billion. He is also president and director of [SoLapharm](#), a Fort Lauderdale-based company that has developed a technology to split pills while maintaining accurate dosages. He also sits on the board of directors for two other publicly traded pharmaceutical companies.