

## **LSUHSC professor secures \$800,000 for drug research**

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By Joel Anderson

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Nicholas Goeders has always had interest in researching medical treatment for addictions. Now he'll have the money, too.

Goeders' start-up company, Embera NeuroTherapeutics Inc., recently received more than \$800,000 from a local group of venture capitalists eager to develop his research for a series of trials with the Food and Drug Administration.

"I can't wait to get clinic trials going," Goeders, a researcher at LSU Health Sciences Center, said Tuesday, "so I can prove what I'm proposing here."

Founded mostly on the strength of Goeders' research, Embera dedicates much of its work to finding treatments for addictions to cocaine, methamphetamine and alcohol, among other disorders.

Goeders' work at Embera eventually earned the attention and, later, the money of investors affiliated with Louisiana Ventures, LP, and Louisiana Fund I.

"We think, given the market opportunity, the venture capital we contributed was worth the risk," said Ross Barrett, managing partner of Bossier City-based Louisiana Ventures, who made the announcement about the investment Tuesday. "We believe this new pharmaceutical drug will help treat not only crystal meth and cocaine addictions, but gambling, alcohol, obesity, as well as other types of disorders.

"There's even indication that it could help stop smoking and nicotine addictions and some issues involved in depression."

Embera secured the \$800,000 as part of Series A financing that will help the company move its patent-pending drug, EMB 001, into Phase 1b FDA trials. EMB 001 is a "novel" composition of two drugs used to treat drug and alcohol addictions, according to the company.

The Series A funding will be used to perform clinical trials and research for the drug.

"We are very excited about the potential of a breakthrough in addiction treatment that could come from this technology," said Joseph Lovett, managing general partner of Louisiana Fund I. "We are delighted to have Embera located in Shreveport."

Officials with the Biomedical Research Foundation of Northwest Louisiana hailed the Embera investment as proof the Shreveport area is steadily making progress in the biotechnology industry.

"The exciting thing is there's a lot of research here in Shreveport and an idea is now being developed into a new product," said Jay Meyers, senior director of development for the foundation. "Nick came up with an idea that could be advanced into a company."

The FDA trials are expected to begin by the summer, officials said. Embera will eventually settle into office and work space at the InterTech Science Park, which provides lab space -- or a wet lab incubator -- at the southeast corner of Kings Highway and Mansfield Road.

"We're very excited about Embera," said Dennis Lower, director of InterTech. "What we're trying to do is create wealth here. This is an expansion of a homegrown knowledge-based industry."

But the idea for it all came from Goeders, who is head of the LSUHSC pharmacology, toxicology and neuroscience department.

Goeders has spent the past 25 years researching ways to treat addictions. He is attempting to prove addictions are fostered by stress or cues in certain environments.

Goeders believes if an addict can learn to avoid or manage their reactions to these cues, the addiction can be controlled.

"It's easy to stop and get clean, but once these people get released into an environment, they get bombarded with all these cues again," he said. "We weren't taught to deal with these cues. ... I'm surprised someone hadn't thought of this 50 years ago."

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