

For immediate release contact:

Mary Vogel

412-770-1623

mvogel@plsg.com

Personal Experiences Lead to Life Sciences Breakthroughs

Pittsburgh Life Sciences Greenhouse Assisted PECA Labs in Developing Technology to Help Congenital Defect Like the One Affecting Son of Jimmy Kimmel

PITTSBURGH (May 3, 2017) —While sitting down to enjoy his morning coffee yesterday, Doug Bernstein, the CEO of PECA Labs (www.pecalabs.com), like many Americans, was riveted to the story of the day: the son of late-night TV host Jimmy Kimmel had been born with a life-threatening heart defect that was, fortunately and miraculously, successfully resolved with a three-hour surgery.

Unlike the millions of viewers who felt immediate emotional investment in the story of Kimmel’s joyous outcome, though, Bernstein has both a personal and professional connection to the idea of improving outcomes for infant cardiac patients worldwide. He is, in fact, a survivor of a congenital heart defect similar to pulmonary atresia, the condition from which Kimmel’s young son suffered, whereby a missing pulmonary artery prevents blood from reaching the child’s lungs, requiring surgery. That motivation led Bernstein to found PECA Labs, a company dedicated to developing medical materials and designs that grow as a child with congenital heart defects grows, avoiding the need for subsequent surgeries later in life.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, about one in every 10,000 newborns suffers from pulmonary atresia. Because of the rarity of such cases, research and treatment innovations may not be pursued as aggressively. In Pittsburgh, however, PECA Labs has been working since 2012 to concentrate on just such “orphan” issues. A Carnegie Mellon University and University of Pittsburgh spin-off that focuses on the pediatric and cardiovascular surgical device spaces, PECA Labs products are intended to provide significantly improved outcomes for children born with rare congenital heart defects, like Kimmel’s son Billy.

Kimmel’s story of his newborn son’s ordeal offers a reminder that the national discussion of the business and policy of health care translates to something deeply personal. The backstories of many health care startup innovators feature similar personal stories.

“My life was saved, shortly after being born with a similar condition, by a pediatric cardiothoracic surgeon,” explained Bernstein. “When I had the opportunity to conduct research and start a company dedicated to addressing this issue, I was eager to do it. I had the technical experience, passion, and drive, but right out of school, no business experience. If not for Pittsburgh Life Sciences Greenhouse (“PLSG”) and the one-to-one

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help, guidance, and perspective received from the Executive In Residence program there, we could never have advanced to where we are today.”

“I think people would be surprised to know that, having worked with over 453 companies and investing in 79 of them, I’ve found many life science and health care startups are populated by people whose life stories, like Doug’s, led them to the work.” said PLSG President James Jordan. “This is a deeply personal business for many people, including the leaders of Cognition Therapeutics, which is dedicated to resolving Alzheimer’s, and Complexa Inc., which focuses on the orphan therapeutics space with a drug pipeline dedicated to several rare disease conditions. It’s an honor to contribute to this important work.”

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About Pittsburgh Life Sciences Greenhouse (PLSG) (www.plsg.com)

The PLSG is Western Pennsylvania’s only investment firm dedicated to life sciences. By investing and supporting the growth of only bioscience companies, PLSG has developed a process to identify ‘winning ideas.’ Success is measured by the ability to attract and grow life sciences companies in the region. Since its inception in 2002, PLSG has assisted more than 450 life sciences companies and has helped create more than 2,300 jobs and has positively impacted another 14,300 jobs in Western Pennsylvania. Forty companies have been provided with office or laboratory space, and now 14 companies and 15 C-level executives have been relocated to Pittsburgh from outside of region. In addition, the PLSG has invested directly and indirectly more than \$22 million in nearly 80 companies, which has leveraged nearly \$1.8 billion in additional capital to the region. For more information about the PLSG, please visit: www.plsg.com or call 412-201-7370