News story: Bristol pharmaceuticals startup bought for £623 million

Ziylo has been bought in a £623 million deal by Novo Nordisk, the biggest maker of diabetes drugs in the world.

Effective and safe management of diabetes

The company – which was spun out of the University of Bristol 4 years ago – has pioneered a synthetic molecule that binds glucose in the bloodstream more effectively in the treatment of diabetes. It comes out of 20 years of research at the university.

This module could eliminate the risk of hypoglycaemia, where blood sugar falls below normal levels. Hypoglycaemia is the main risk to those using insulin therapy and can be dangerous if not treated properly, leading to seizures or coma.

With the acquisition, Novo Nordisk hopes to use the module to develop a new kind of insulin so that people with diabetes can manage their condition more safely.

It could take 10 years before the new treatment comes to market, with the £623 million deal staged based on the potential success of the treatment.

Research supported by Innovate UK and EPSRC

Ziylo was founded by Professor Anthony Davis, PHD student Dr Harry Destecroix and businessman Tom Smart.

The team has received various research and innovation support over the years to help translate their academic thinking into commercial application.

They went through the Innovation and Commercialisation of University Research (ICURe) programme, which helps university researchers explore the commercial potential of their idea, and were awarded £500,000 by Innovate UK to set up Ziylo.

Professor Davis – a supervisor at the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council's Centre for Doctoral Training in Chemical Synthesis – has also been supported long-term by the council with 3 awards for his research.

Dr Harry Destecroix, Chief Executive and co-founder of Ziylo, said:

> Novo Nordisk is the ideal company to maximise the potential of the Ziylo glucose binding molecules in glucose responsive insulins and diabetes applications. It brings hope of a truly groundbreaking treatment to diabetes patients.