Press release: Zika virus, superbugs and arthritis targeted through £26 million fund

Sixty seven projects will win a share of £26 million funding available through Biomedical Catalyst 2016, which is run by Innovate UK and the Medical Research Council, and aims to develop innovative healthcare technologies and processes.

For the first time, Scotland's economic development agency Scottish Enterprise have also invested in projects. They have provided additional funding to seven Scottish companies, securing local support for nationally competitive innovations.

Funded projects

- Glasgow-based SAW DX will create 'ultrasonic holograms' to diagnose sexually transmitted infections much quicker than the current tests allow.

- The Native Antigen Company from Oxford are developing a quick and easy test for Zika virus, which differentiates the virus from Dengue Fever and hopes to provide reassurance to millions of mothers-to-be who live in tropical countries.

- Cambridge based Cell Guidance Systems have developed a way to use protein from silk worms to heal cartilage and potentially reduce the need for joint replacement in people with osteoarthritis.

- Micropharm, from Newcastle Emlyn in West Wales are using antibodies produced by sheep to develop a treatment for antibiotic resistant 'superbugs', such as Chlostridium difficle.

Supporting the announcements, Chief Executive of Innovate UK Dr Ruth McKernan said:

> Our biosciences sector, supported by the Biomedical Catalyst, is a fantastic example of the UK's joined-up innovation ecosystem in action. Our excellent researchers develop new and novel treatments and procedures that are then commercialised by our world-class businesses.
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> By becoming a co-funder in the Biomedical Catalyst, Scottish

> Enterprise will be helping to bring together Innovate UK's national expertise in innovation with their own specific local priorities to boost local and national economic growth.

Sir John Savill, Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council said:

> The Biomedical Catalyst is an important collaboration between the Medical Research Council and Innovate UK and we are pleased with the impressive results from the initiative to date. This unique partnership is clearly valued by both academia and industry – as evidenced by this latest investment from Scottish Enterprise.

Julia Brown, Director of Life and Chemical Sciences at Scottish Enterprise added:

> We're working hard to create more opportunities for Scottish businesses to secure business innovation funding. This first-of-its-kind partnership with Innovate UK and the Medical Research Council is just one way we're achieving this, while integrating our support with our partners to generate more impact for the Scottish economy.
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> I'm pleased to see seven Scottish life science companies winning funding to support their innovative healthcare products, which demonstrates Scotland's thriving life sciences industry and our long established reputation for creativity and business innovation.

The Biomedical Catalyst partnership between Innovate UK and the Medical Research Council has provided funding for 384 projects that have led to more than 60 first-in-human studies for innovative products. The programme has also helped bring more than £1 billion of additional investment into the UK bioscience sector.

In Autumn Statement 2016, the Chancellor Phillip Hammond announced £100 million of additional funding to extend and enhance the Biomedical Catalyst to support life science companies and translate cutting-edge medical technologies into commercial success.