

News Release

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Sales Boost For World Class Surgical Innovator



A world class precision engineering company specialising in uniquely innovative products for minimally-invasive surgery is poised for substantial sales growth as new areas open up for its market-leading instruments.

Leeds-based Surgical Innovations Ltd has developed a new SwingTop™ version of its fast-selling YelloPort™ port access system, which offers hospital cost savings between 30% and 70%. Designed for use in minimally invasive surgery, the new YelloPort+plus™ system promises to take the world by storm, with the American market alone estimated to be worth around £150m.

Carrying the CE Mark in Europe and Food & Drug Administration approval in the US, the new model features a disposable sealing unit that can be switched quickly to accommodate varying instrument widths. The device is ideally suited to a wide range of minimally invasive operations, including stomach stapling and banding operations as numbers of obese patients increase.

Leeds is a leading UK centre for healthcare technology and Surgical Innovations is an established world leader in a sector where “Made in Britain” is an important seal of approval. This is certainly true of the company’s range of highly specialised medical scissors and other intricately engineered

products, including the FastClamp™, used by operating surgeons as a “third arm.”

US sales growth for the YelloPort+plus™ system will be further aided by the company’s recently completed major distribution deal, accessing some 6,000 hospitals across America. Surgical Innovations raised £4m through a share placing to fund the expansion and the deal with MGM Med is targeting a minimum sales worth £10m over five years. This against a highly successful 2006, when annual profits almost doubled to £696,000 as revenue increased by 11% to £4.46m.

Paul Stephens, Leeds City Council’s chief economic services officer, said: “By combining expertise in precision engineering with the know-how of leading surgeons, Surgical Innovations has created a unique product range with massive market potential and major healthcare benefits. It’s exactly this combination of enterprise and invention that has put Leeds at the forefront of innovation in healthcare technology.”

World’s Best

Surgical Innovations manufacturing director Paul Birtles has overseen a three-year programme of change and investment that has seen some £400,000 invested in state of the art machinery and production returned in-house, following a period of outsourcing. Further substantial investment is in the pipeline for the company that employs 40 skilled staff dedicated to creating products designed to speed patient recovery.

“Our new sliding head CNC lathes operate at tremendous speed, including on “lights out” shifts – where they can be set up to run, unsupervised through the night,” says Paul. “These and a complete reorganisation of our manufacturing facilities have led to tremendous improvements in productivity. For example, we quickly moved from making 9000 surgical scissors a month to 14000.

“Couple this with a highly skilled workforce and the result is high quality products returning better margins. The process requires continued investment and innovation, but it enables us to beat the Chinese, no matter how much labour they can throw at a project.”

A strong design and customer focus are also key factors in the success of the company. Design director Mike White and his team work closely with surgeons – in and out of theatre - constantly seeking to improve existing laparoscopic instruments, while simultaneously developing new ones.

Prototyping is continuous, with direct input from company founder and clinical consultant Professor McMahon, who is based principally at LGI and is described as the “Michael Schumacher” of minimally invasive surgery.

The Surgical Innovations team has been further strengthened by the arrival of international clinical specialist Clive van Geems, from South Africa and European sales consultant Gabor Bien, from Hungary.

Ends

Notes to editors: Surgical Innovations began trading in 1992, after Professor McMahon approached Peter Moran to collaborate on developing improved laparoscopic instruments. Early prototypes were developed in the family garage by Mr Moran, who had served his apprenticeship as a precision engineer with Leeds-based medical equipment manufacturer Charles Thackray.

Photography: Surgical Innovations manufacturing director Paul Birtles with the YelloPort+plus™ system featuring the patented “SwingTop”™ technology.