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"Brighton Medical Imaging Firm Lucid Boosts Revenue"  
By Tom Tobin

For years, Lucid Inc. in Brighton has successfully made an imaging device that takes the ouch out of skin biopsies.

The idea from the start was to allow accurate cancer diagnoses, using the innovative VivaScope, without having to remove the lesion. What Lucid didn't have until this year was a way to obtain revenue from the imaging process and the transfer of information among doctors and institutions.

That has changed, and to the benefit of Lucid, which endured a rough financial patch in the early 2000s, laid off workers and reworked its business plan.

The company, which has federally approved Internet-based technology called VivaNet to move and store the VivaScope images, now is gaining dollars — called "click revenue" — when images are sent from one medical office or lab to another.

Before, Lucid was making money when it sold its devices. Now, it is making money from the initial sale and each time the devices are used. The difference is golden.

"We're ecstatic about where we are now," CEO Jay Eastman said. "It's hard to say what the gains will be, though we know how many devices we have out there and how many times these devices will be used. Other companies with similar technology have increased their revenue by \$100 million over time."

Lucid's product, and its enhanced revenue stream, comes at a time of increased awareness about skin cancers, with melanoma the most serious.

Skin cancers account for 70 percent of all new cancers diagnosed, Eastman said. The retail market is flooded with skin-protection products, and the prevalence of tanning salons has led New York and other states to regulate them more closely.

As with all cancers, early detection is critical. Eastman said many people are leery of showing skin marks or lesions to their doctors for fear that a biopsy will be ordered.

"My wife tells a story about going into a bank. The teller, knowing who I am, asked her what the mole on her back might be," Eastman said. "She was apparently more willing to ask my wife than to take her concern to a doctor."

That wariness, he said, may dissipate as imaging technology replaces physical removal of the lesion.

Dr. Elaine Gilmore, a dermatologist and assistant professor at the University of Rochester, called Lucid's technology "very interesting."

"It's certainly possible that imaging of this kind will eventually replace the skin biopsy," Gilmore said. The only drawback, she said, is the ability of smaller clinics to afford the advanced equipment.

A skin biopsy is no more painful than a skinned knee, Gilmore said. "But it's certainly possible that people will be more willing to be screened if this technology is widespread."