

Akron biomedical drive gets results

Company expects to start making synthetic bones here next week

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No bones about it, Akron's push to grow its biomedical industry just got another boost.

A biomedical company that makes synthetic bone substitute products announced Wednesday that it is moving its manufacturing jobs here from New Jersey.

Therics LLC, part of the Akron-headquartered Theken Family of Companies, will start making its bone substitute surgical products in Akron by next week, said Rachael Smith, Theken's director of marketing communications.

"We're thrilled about having it here in Akron," Smith said. "Akron has been great to us."

Theken acquired Therics, an 11-year-old New Jersey firm, in July 2005.

Therics is moving its manufacturing from New Jersey to the Akron Global Business Accelerator, a city initiative that allows startup and growing businesses support and reduced rent space in Canal Place, said Mike Lehere, the accelerator's chief executive.

Therics makes substitute bone products from a material called Beta-Tricalcium Phosphate that can be used instead of donor bones for procedures that require bone fusion - things like spine surgery, trauma repairs and bone tumor removal.

Just as with donor bones, the synthetic products are used to connect the patient's bones so the two ends can grow together, Smith said.

Though donor bones from cadavers are used more often than synthetic products, the interest in bone substitutes continues to grow, Smith said.

Recent news stories about untested, stolen cadavers being used for donor bone fragments have raised safety concerns.

By using synthetic products, Smith said, "you've eliminated the risk of any disease transmission."

Therics initially will employ about half a dozen people. Smith declined to release sales figures.

Smith credited Mayor Don Plusquellic's initiative to increase biomedical development within the city as part of the reason for moving Therics manufacturing jobs to the city.

Last year, the city designated a biomedical corridor surrounding Akron City, Akron General and Akron Children's hospitals to encourage medical-related development.

The proximity to medical experts at hospitals in Akron and Cleveland helped make the move more attractive, Smith said.

“This is the best way that we can sell other people on the biomedical corridor, which is with testimonies such as this where a company actually picks up and starts an initiative here,” said Plusquellic’s spokesman, Mark Williamson.