

MINNEAPOLIS ST. PAUL BUSINESS JOURNAL

Friday, May 30, 2008

Nose for opportunity: Entellus develops sinusitis treatment

Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal - by [Doug Hamlin](#) Contributing Writer



Nancy Kuehn | Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal

Entellus Medical CEO Thomas Ressemann displays the company's device that treats chronic rhinosinusitis. At left: co-founder Peter Keith

Entellus Medical Inc. may have hit the trifecta: a new medical procedure that is less traumatic for patients, pays doctors better and costs insurance companies less. That's what Entellus President and CEO Thomas Ressemann said makes the company's treatment for chronic rhinosinusitis a standout.

Sinusitis, an inflammation of the sinus cavity that results in a blockage of mucus drainage, affects about 35 million people in the United States every year. Of them, about half a million seek surgery -- a procedure Ressemann said is painful, invasive and, because it is performed under general anesthesia, requires lengthy postoperative care. And Ressemann knows; he underwent the surgery eight years ago.

For Ressemann, leaving the cardiovascular business, where he had worked in both engineering and marketing since the 1980s, took some convincing.

"He was looking to innovate in one of the more crowded spaces [cardiovascular]," said Josh Baltzell, managing director of Split Rock Partners, which is now on the cusp of closing Series C funding for Entellus.

So Entellus co-founders Ressemann, Peter Keith and Dr. Ted Truitt sat down with Baltzell, whose Menlo Park, Calif., and Eden Prairie-based venture-capital firm was seeking to diversify outside its many cardiology investments. Baltzell offered a list of

areas Split Rock was interested in: spine, obesity, neurology, and ear, nose and throat.

"The cardiovascular space is pretty well-served," Ressemann said. "There are a lot of companies chasing a few problems out there."

That's not the case in the traditionally underserved ear, nose and throat business. Time to market was another factor in the decision.

"We wanted a product we could get to market in a five-year period of time," Ressemann said. "That's harder and harder to do in the cardiovascular space."

Within six months, Entellus returned to Split Rock with a business model, Ressemann said.

The company has spent the past year and a half conceiving and developing the procedure, testing it in cadavers, conducting clinical trials and seeking Food and Drug Administration approval.

Between 50 and 60 percent of sinusitis patients are eligible for the newly approved, less-invasive procedure, which takes about 30 minutes with minimal recovery time.

Ressemann said the company is now focused on refining the procedure to increase the eligibility of sinusitis patients to 80 percent. And Split Rock is confident in its investment.

Said Baltzell of Ressemann: "The more responsibility you give him the better he does."

Entellus Medical Inc.

City: Maple Grove

CEO: Thomas Ressemann

Business: Ear, nose and throat medical procedure

Founded: 2006

Web: **entellusmedical.com**

If you have any questions about this article, contact Assistant Managing Editor Kim Johnson at (612) 288-2114 or kkj@bizjournals.com.

All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.