

Case Study 5.1. TechID units at the Hospitals of Copenhagen Region of Denmark

CRITICAL AREA OF FOCUS 1: “Scouting ideas/technologies from the PRO and incentivizing researchers to disclose IP”

BEST PRACTICE FOR: “Innovation Scouts” **AIMED AT:** TTOs/PROs/Research Hospitals/Policy-makers

UNIVERSITY: Hospitals of Copenhagen Region of Denmark (Denmark)

TTO: Clinical Research Centre and the regional Centre for Innovation and Research



The context:

The **Capital Region** is the largest region in Denmark with 30% of country's population. With healthcare services being its largest responsibility, the Capital Region of Denmark oversees 11 hospitals.

In 2012, the **Copenhagen Regional Council** to devote 1 million DKK from the budget for an establishment of the **Centre for Innovation and Research (CIR)** at the Capital Region of Denmark, as a merger of three previous institutes devoted to technology transfer and innovation. Its purpose of the Unit was to promote research and innovation in the healthcare services together with businesses and universities at national as well as international levels.

Copenhagen University Hospital is a conglomerate of several hospitals in the region, together with the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences at the University of Copenhagen. The Hospital has 5 strategic research areas, and a clinical research centre.

The problem:

The first problem in the interaction between the regional CIR and the Hospital was associated with a **difficulty of effective technology scouting** due to the distance between the TTO located in Copenhagen and the hospitals and their research centers located throughout the Copenhagen Region of Denmark. Moreover, when business developers from the regional TTO were brought to make technology transfer negotiations on behalf of researchers it took very long for them to get into the process.

The second problem was related to **insufficient involvement of hospital management** in technology scouting and commercialization activities.

The amount of time and resources researchers can allocate to technology transfer and commercialization depends very much on hospital management and their support.

The solution:

In 2009, the CIR together with research centers at the Hospitals of the Capital Region established **TechID units**, such as one at the Clinical Research Centre of the Hvidovre Hospital, one of the main hospitals in the region. The TechID units were intended to **solve the problem of the distance** between the regional TTO and the healthcare researchers and to increase the hospital management involvement in technology commercialization. Within the TechID project, the main task of the regional TTO was to **detect new ideas** from hospitals through their technology scouts and evaluate the ideas from technological and market perspectives. Instead, the TechID project participants from the hospitals focused more on finding and supporting dedicated researchers and managers ready to **invest time and effort in technology commercialization**.

To solve the problem of distance, the TechID project brought **technology scouts from the regional TTO closer to researchers**, by asking them to spend one or two days per week at the hospitals. These technology scouts could closely interact with researchers and get to know the overall research environment. Their emphasis was on early spotting of entrepreneurial research teams with a special potential for innovative and commercially attractive medical inventions. For instance, the Hvidovre Hospital traditionally hosted an annual Research Day when all young researchers of the hospital could send abstracts with their research ideas.

In order to identify commercially interesting areas, the technology scouts systematically reviewed all the research abstracts submitted to such event, in order to establish new contacts.

In addition to that, the regional CIR realized the importance of active **involvement of the hospital management in technology commercialization**. Therefore, it applied a top-down approach where managers were asked to participate in a screening process to identify in the hospital's research portfolio inventions with potential for commercial application. To raise the knowledge and awareness on the different activities required to bring an idea to the market, the TechID project also established a **training programme** for hospital management and researchers. Through this training programme, the regional TTO tried to convince the heads of departments and research centres to devote more time and resources to researchers to work on technology commercialization. The training program for managers, for instance, focused on the following questions related to researchers' inventions: "What do you want to do with such inventions?", "How much time do you want to invest?", "Would you see this project as part of the strategy of your Department?", "Do you have the resources to help those researchers?"

Alignment to PROGRESS-TT:

This case is a good illustration of the "Innovation Scouts, Best Practice in PROGRESS-TT Critical Area of Focus 1 "Scouting ideas/technologies from the PRO and incentivising researchers to disclose IP".

The scouting work carried out within the TechID project has led to a steady stream of invention disclosures and to the **creation of a successful spinoff**, 1Cryobio, now based in Switzerland. The Clinical Research Centre also generally applies other indicators to **measure the success of scouting activities**, such as the receipt of Proof-of-concept funding (5 projects were able to benefit from external POC funding thanks to the new approach). The experience of TechID project can be instructive to other TTOs in Europe, especially for those organizations involved in medical and clinical research which have to deal with centralized and distant. In this case, although there can be many different challenges associated with technology transfer, in the case of Copenhagen University Hospital there was a strategic focus to address and solve two key challenges.

The first challenge for the TechID project was to **establish closer collaborations** between the regional TTO and local researchers, which was tackled by bringing technology scouts directly to the hospitals. The second challenge was to more directly **involve hospital management in technology scouting and commercialization activities**, which was mainly accomplished through management education and training activities. In this sense, it was crucial to raise awareness on the amount of work, time and resources required to successfully engage in technology transfer activities, so to focus on those Departments that really wanted to undertake commercialization and entrepreneurship activities and allocate the necessary resources to that.

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