

Pioneering healthcare start-up ScubaTx raises £1.5m to transform organ transplant procedures

ScubaTx Ltd., a pioneering healthcare start-up that has developed new technology to support organ transplantation, has raised £1.5m in funding, including investment led by the GMC Life Sciences Fund by Praetura and grant funding from Innovate UK.

ScubaTx will use the investment to enhance its designs and develop its device, as it looks to obtain the permissions to sell its products worldwide, with a specific focus on the UK, USA and mainland Europe and an initial eye on pancreatic procedures for patients with diabetes.

Founded in 2020, ScubaTx is a pre-clinical company that has developed a prototype organ transportation device that extends the time that human organs are viable for, with the goal of transforming organ transplant procedures worldwide.

The device utilises technology called ‘persufflation’ to deliver advanced organ preservation, by cooling donated organs and oxygenating tissues with humidified gas at tightly controlled pressures and flow rates. The company is now finalising mechanical tests and expects to begin pre-clinical trials in the next few weeks and pivotal clinical trials in the next year.

The company, which is a spinout from Newcastle University, has also announced plans to open an office in Greater Manchester as it looks to increase its UK footprint beyond the North East and continue its collaboration with several prestigious research organisations here in the UK, in mainland Europe and North America.

The round was led by GMC Life Sciences Fund by Praetura, a venture capital fund which invests in early-stage businesses and SMEs to boost life sciences innovation, which is managed by Praetura Ventures. The fund is also supported by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Cheshire & Warrington LEP and Bruntwood SciTech.

David Campbell, CEO of ScubaTx, said: “I’m incredibly excited about the future of ScubaTx. Securing funding from the GMC Life Sciences Fund by Praetura and Innovate UK will now allow us to finalise our first commercial product and continue with our mission to transform the lives of organ patients worldwide.

“The capability of ScubaTx’s technology, as well as the depth of experience within the team, is immense, and this is what is giving us our strongest platform for growth. We’re deeply committed to improving lives, and this shines through in the team’s effort – the investment will help transform that effort into life-saving actions.”

Sim Singh-Landa, head of the GMC Life Sciences Fund by Praetura, said: “The strength of a fund like the GMC Life Sciences Fund by Praetura is that it enables the region to attract really inspiring businesses like ScubaTx, adding to the socio-economic prosperity of the local area and enabling the North West to continue cementing itself as a leader in life sciences. We can’t wait to work with the team and play a key role in their growth journey.”

Dr William ‘Bill’ Scott (Chief Scientific Officer of ScubaTx and Senior Lecturer at Newcastle University in Transplant and Regenerative Medicine), whose lifetime of academic research has led to this point commented: “I’m incredibly proud of the ScubaTx team and grateful to our investors for the opportunity to see this technology translate into clinical practice; positively impacting patient’s lives.”

Professor Derek Manas, an advisor to ScubaTx, who is the current Medical Director for NHS Blood and Transplant, Professor of Transplant and Hepato-Biliary Surgery at Newcastle University, and a Consultant Hepatobiliary and Transplant Surgeon and Director of Newcastle’s Institute of Transplantation also commented on the potential impact of ScubaTx. “I have been involved with ScubaTx for a number of years now and have witnessed the company’s journey to this ground-breaking development, which I believe has the potential to revolutionise how we maintain and transport organs for transplantation. There is a critical shortage of healthy organs available for treating critically ill patients and I have high hopes that ScubaTx could play a major role in improving working practices and improve supply.”

The investment by the GMC Life Sciences Fund By Praetura was managed and completed by Jess Jackson (investment manager) and Stefano Smith (graduate investment associate), with support from Sim Singh-Landa (head of the GMC Life Sciences Fund By Praetura). Jordan Dargue, a director of NorthInvest, was also closely involved with the deal, with legal firms Irwin Mitchell and Ward Hadaway acting on behalf of Praetura Ventures and ScubaTx respectively.

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Editor’s Notes

About ScubaTx

ScubaTx is a pioneering healthcare start-up and spinout from Newcastle University that has developed a unique organ preservation device. ScubaTx’s device uses a technology called persufflation to deliver advanced organ preservation by cooling and oxygenating a donated organ with humidified gas at tightly controlled pressures and flow rates.

The small, simple and affordable multi-organ preservation system is designed to not only improve transplant outcomes but to also extend the maximum preservation time while reducing the logistical and financial pressures on already over-burdened healthcare systems.

The ScubaTx device is based on an entirely new system architecture, coupled with state-of-the-art software systems, that oxygenates organs and is expected to deliver the following advantages:

- preserves organs for 24h+ with major cost saving and logistical advantages to healthcare systems

- increases supply of organs by enabling use of organs that would otherwise be discarded
- uses a single device for multiple organ types (kidney, pancreas, heart, liver) leading to more efficient deployment
- automation of the work that would previously have been carried out by a highly skilled technician
- small format - easier and less expensive to transport

About Praetura Ventures

Praetura Ventures is a Manchester-based venture capital firm which invests in early-stage, high-growth businesses across the UK, with a particular focus on supporting entrepreneurs across the North of England.

Praetura Ventures is committed to adding value post-investment and providing the 'more than money' support that businesses need to grow, including additional expertise, resources, networks and guidance, to its investee companies.

Since 2019, Praetura Ventures has backed 33 companies, including North West headquartered businesses Culture Shift, XR Games and Peak.

The firm also has a Venture Partner programme - an innovative and collaborative initiative that is aimed at experienced, connected and successful individuals who have a desire to add value and potentially provide mentorship, advice, introductions and investment to the next generation of entrepreneurs. In just a few months, the firm has grown its Venture Partner base to 85+ members, typically C-suite level individuals.

Learn more at praeturaventures.com.

About the GMC Life Sciences Fund By Praetura

The GMC Life Sciences Fund By Praetura is a new £20m investment fund by Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, Bruntwood SciTech and Praetura Ventures. The fund was launched in May 2022 by the Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham and supports life sciences businesses based in the region or those who are committed to scaling here.

About NorthInvest

NorthInvest, a not for profit, was founded in 2015 by Professor Adam Beaumont with a mission to drive grassroots growth across the North of the UK by unlocking early-stage funding to startups. In the past year, NorthInvest has driven £22m of seed funds into a diverse range of startups. NorthInvest has had significant success with its initiatives such as Fund Her North and Women Angels of the North.

