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## Canadian startup ecosystem keeping our medical sector innovations alive

By Suzanne Wintrob, Special to Financial Post | March 20, 2017 |

### MedX Health Corp. - Whack that mole

With just 640 or so dermatologists serving more than 35 million Canadians, it can take months to get an appointment. For those with a suspicious mole or lesion, it's an anxious wait. MedX Health Corp. ([medxhealth.com](http://medxhealth.com) Stock symbol: "MDX" TSXV) is hoping to ease the pain.

Unlike the traditional dermoscopy used by most dermatologists that examines



the skin surface and requires biopsy for deeper inspection, MedX's non-invasive SIAscopy skin assessment tool (seen in photo) uses light to penetrate not only above and but also up to two millimetres below the skin surface to detect potential melanoma. The image is scanned to a computer and then securely transmitted to one of three Canadian dermatologists on MedX's current roster, who reviews the scan and provides the patient with next steps within 72 hours.

It's currently being rolled out to medical clinics at Loblaw stores in six Ontario cities and will then expand to other provinces. It's also at work at Air Canada's medical facility at Toronto Pearson International Airport to test pilots and flight crews, who are at an increased risk of skin cancer due to UVA radiation penetrating aircraft windows.

“Early stage melanoma (patients have) a 95 per cent survival rate and (it) costs the healthcare system very little – it’s a simple cut to take it out,” says MedX senior vice-president Mike Druhan. “But Stage 4 melanoma is a \$300,000 to \$400,000 cost to the healthcare system and life expectancy is 10 per cent. The goal is to get in and get screened early and capture it early.”

According to the Skin Cancer Foundation of Canada, more than 80,000 cases of skin cancer – the most common type of cancer – are diagnosed in Canada each year, with more than 5,000 being melanoma, the mostly deadly form. Most can be treated if caught early, yet few people screen their moles or lesions on a regular basis, making a case for MedX’s easy-to-access tool.

The SIAscopy technology was developed at Cambridge University in the mid-2000s (“It was the size of a small fridge!” says Druhan) and acquired by a U.K. company that subsequently divested it. MedX purchased it in 2011 and hired an executive team to develop a business strategy, seek funding and ramp up production. A public company, MedX secured \$1.5 million through investors and went through several product redesigns at its ISO 13485-compliant facility in Mississauga, Ont., to get it down to a PC-based handheld. Thanks to the technology’s European origins, the team snagged contracts with more than 200 pharmacy and clinic locations in Norway, Sweden and the U.K. The goal is to go national across Canada by the end of the year.

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