

New breakthrough in wound dressing

South African pharmaceutical company, Cipla Medpro, in conjunction with the Microbiology Department at the University of Stellenbosch, has announced the development of what is being touted as a breakthrough in wound dressing.



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The team behind the Wound Dressing Project recently received a prestigious NSTF-BHP Billiton Award nomination in the category of Outstanding Contribution to SETI through Research leading to Innovation. Team leader, Professor Leon Dicks - Department of Microbiology, University of Stellenbosch - describes the product as a nanofibre wound dressing with controlled release of antimicrobial peptides for patients with burn wounds.

Dicks developed the wound dressing by incorporating broad-spectrum antimicrobial peptides into nanofibres. According to Dicks, the dressing releases the antimicrobial peptides in a slow and controlled manner and needs to be changed only once a week. "This is ideal in the treatment of burn wound infections. By altering the nanofibres, the dressing becomes part of the new skin and supports the healing process. This innovation stemmed from years of research on antimicrobial peptides produced by lactic acid bacteria."

The wound dressing, a first of its kind, is being commercialised in partnership with Cipla Medpro, which has also patented the product both locally and abroad. According to Dr Nic De Jongh, the Medical Director, at Cipla Medpro, the Wound Dressing Project is reflective of the type of innovation and breakthroughs that can be achieved through collaboration between the private sector and research institutions in South Africa.

Dicks says the funding and support provided by Cipla Medpro was vital in the success of the Wound Dressing Project. "This product shows that we are doing exceptionally well with what we have, but with increased funding, we can do even better."

This project follows on the initial research which identified and patented unique probiotic strains which produced the antimicrobial peptides. These strains and their peptides form the basis for an innovative probiotic product, called Entiro™, soon to be marketed by Cipla Medpro.

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