



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## AxiMed Spine awaits OK to sell disc replacement

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When spinal implant company AcroMed left Northeast Ohio for Massachusetts in 1998, former employee Jim Kuras decided to stay in Cleveland.

A few years later, he and another former AcroMed employee started AxiMed Spine Corp. in a small Willoughby office.

Since then, Kuras has received three patents related to the Freedom Lumbar Disc System - the disc replacement that is helping to lead the next generation of spinal implants into the marketplace.

AxiMed is close to finishing its European clinical trial, and has applied to the Food and Drug Administration to do its pivotal trial in the United States.

If all goes well, AxiMed, which employs a dozen people now, could be selling its spinal disc replacements in Europe by next year, said its chief executive, Patrick McBrayer.

"It's overwhelming," Kuras said Friday during an open house to show local and state officials a recent expansion of high-tech manufacturing and testing space at the company's headquarters in Garfield Heights.

On Friday, Lt. Gov. Lee Fisher cut a ribbon draped across the doorway of the clean room where most of the Freedom discs will be made.

AxiMed used a \$750,000 Innovation Ohio Loan from the state's Third Frontier Project to build and equip the room, as well as an adjacent testing room.

AxiMed plans to hire clinical researchers as well as technicians to make and test its spinal implants - 75 percent of which eventually are expected to be made in Garfield Heights, McBrayer said.

Committed to developing a biotechnology industry in Northeast Ohio, Kuras started AxiMed in 2001. Soon, he and his partner were traveling across the country to find venture capitalists to invest in the company.

Though firms on the East and West coasts were interested in the company's technology, they didn't want to invest in Ohio, said Peter Kleinhenz, managing director for the Columbus office of CID Capital, the Indianapolis venture capital firm.

In 2003, CID Capital and three other venture firms - Primus Venture Partners in Mayfield Heights, Early Stage Partners in Cleveland and Reservoir Venture Partners in Columbus - invested nearly \$3 million in AxiMed.

"We're really pleased with the progress the company has made," Kleinhenz said during the open house. AxiMed has since raised more than \$20 million in additional venture capital.

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