

Five Minutes With

## Baiju Shah

Pittsburgh Business Times - June 29, 2007

by [Vincent Lara-Cinisomo](#)

*Baiju Shah, president of BioEnterprise in Cleveland, said last month that his organization and its Pittsburgh counterpart, the Pittsburgh Life Sciences Greenhouse, would cross-promote each other's biotech sectors in an effort to create a megaregion for medical research and life-science businesses. Shah recently spent five minutes talking about his vision for the partnership.*

### **What cities do you see as competitors?**

I don't label them as competitors, but with regions such as Minneapolis/St. Paul and the Research Triangle (in North Carolina) garnering attention, we would like to be known as the next best place to invest outside of the West Coast. When you add up the combined reach of (Cleveland and Pittsburgh), we already exceed the type of activity in those regions. And with venture capitalists, at the national level, what most of them don't recognize is that Cleveland and Pittsburgh are less than two hours apart. When we tell them you can fly to both in less than an hour and do business in both, they say, 'Wow, you've got all of these great companies and startup activity in the region.'

### **Is there a particular sub-category in the biotechnology/life sciences sector you would like to see surface?**

We're probably at 50 percent to 55 percent medical devices, and maybe one-third to one-quarter health care and only a small percentage is true biopharmaceuticals.

### **What are the biggest obstacles to the partnership succeeding?**

The only real obstacle, and I'm happy to say I haven't seen it surface, is traditional parochialism between the cities. It's a very outdated notion that state borders cannot be crossed to do business. The entrepreneurs get it, and they are naturally collaborating across borders, whether it's from Europe, or someone commuting from Boston. Nationally, the reaction from investors has been so positive that I see no barriers to building interest. The venture capital community is indifferent to geography.

### **What's the goal of the partnership?**

Economic development. Both are transitioning from an industrial job base to knowledge-based jobs. The ultimate goal is to build on the great asset base by creating more jobs and more economic wealth.