

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

# Saccomanno scientist searches for new ways to detect cancer early

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Dr. Marty R. Jacobson, with St. Mary's Hospital's Saccomanno Research Institute, recently made a pitch to the Business Incubator's board of directors for a \$111,838 grant to continue his research. Jacobson is working on early detection of lung cancer and a blood test to check for cancer on a microscopic level. The funds he applied for would come from the incubator's newly established Western Colorado Office of Technology Transfer.

Similar technology transfer offices on the Front Range have made grants for scientific research in many different disciplines. Jacobson's proposal, if accepted by the state, would be the first for the office of technology transfer for the Western Slope.

Such offices typically help mature technologies and then protect them, typically through a patent. It is then the responsibility of an organization to disseminate the technology and pursue a commercial path. The incubator's board of directors

unanimously voted in favor of submitting Jacobson's proposal to the state.

"It has such high potentials," said Chris Reddin, executive director of the incubator. "The potential for the early detection of lung cancer, that could be huge."

Jacobson said his research would provide proof of his principles. The tests he develops could be taken to private companies and developed for the market.

"This really is very, very early stage development of research that is going toward further development of a technology," he said.

Jacobson is working to improve the test for lung cancer, which originally was developed by Dr. Geno Saccomanno. The old test relies on pathologists to look at cells under a microscope and determine if they are cancerous. Jacobson said his test would remove the possibility of human error.

"We are trying to take this to the next level," Jacobson said. "It would be the equivalent of molecular pathology."

The second test he is developing also would improve upon existing technol-

ogy. Jacobson is developing a blood test, a microfluidic analysis, that would check a person's blood for free-floating indicators of tumors. Currently, there is a test that checks for only one marker. Jacobson wants to expand that and look for numerous early indicators of cancer.

"It's highly likely other types of cells are present that are currently not being evaluated," he said. "We are in the basic end of it, trying to figure out the best way of doing things and looking at more than one cell."

Jacobson said he already is working on the technology and is receiving some funding through St. Mary's, the National Institutes of Health and private foundations.

Offices of technology transfer are not a new concept, but there has never been one on the Western Slope.

Many institutions of higher education have them, said David Allen, vice president for technology transfer at the University of Colorado.

Allen said that Jacobson's proposal "would have a pretty good chance" of receiving funding through the program.