

# SURREY

## City's diversity helps keep biotech sector healthy

**TECHNOLOGY** | Immigrant population was selling point in U.S. firm's choice of city for medical trial

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Surrey's ethnically diverse population has helped make it the perfect testing ground for new device that could potentially screen for infectious and potentially life-threatening diseases in a matter of seconds.

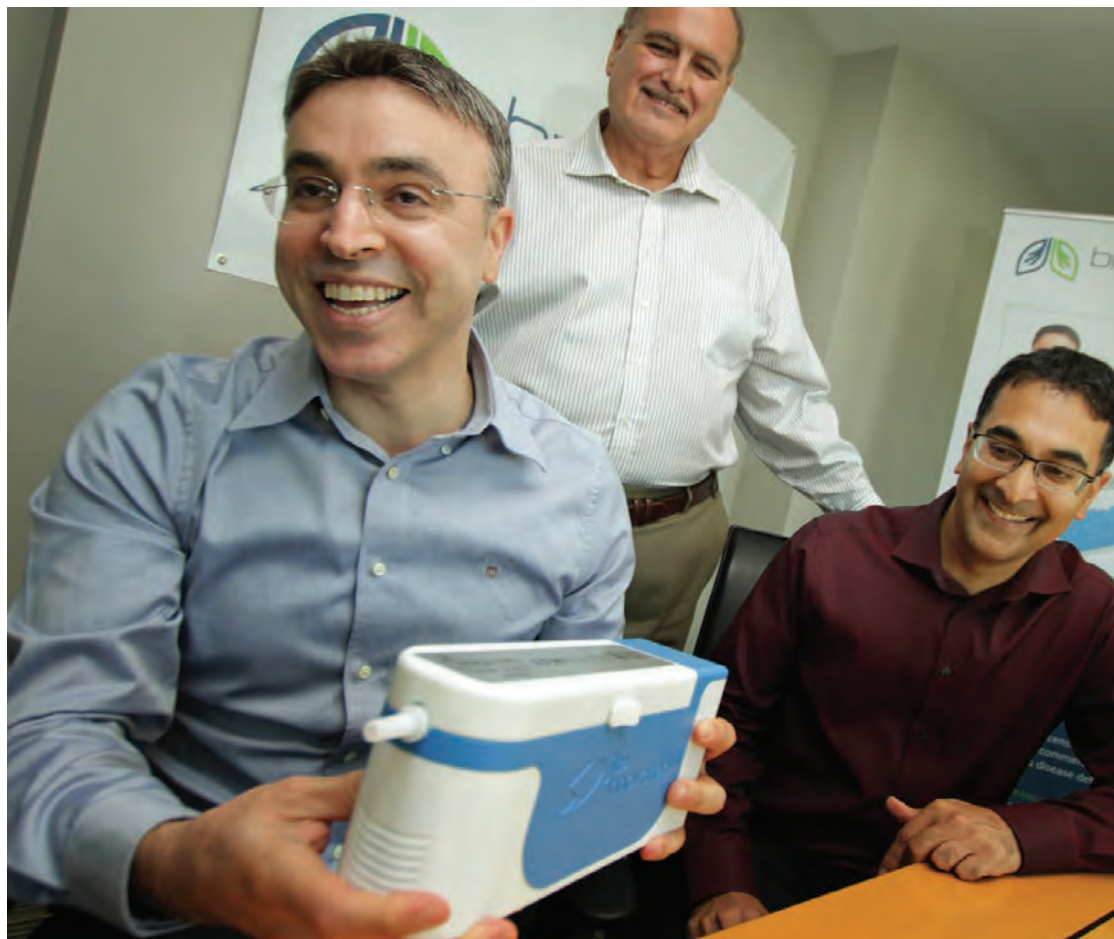
**Breathtec Biomedical Inc.** (CSE: BTH), a medical diagnostics company based in Florida, announced June 28 that it had hand-picked Surrey to run clinical trials out of Innovation Boulevard.

Breathtec CEO **Guy LaTorre** said the company initially started looking at Surrey because of its burgeoning health and technology sector.

"We also chose Surrey because of its large and diverse population," LaTorre said. "[And its] close proximity to health care facilities and **Fraser Health** makes for a great environment to set up shop and run our clinical trial. It's a world-class city with great people and amenities. So the decision to set up shop here was an easy one for us to make."

Called Na-Nose, the nanotechnology-based breath analysis device can detect volatile biomarkers of diseases. Conceived at **Technion - Israel Institute of Technology** by **Hossam Haick** (now in-licensed by Breathtec), the device will start to undergo trials shortly at doctors' offices across the city before testing is expanded to **Surrey Memorial Hospital's** emergency room.

The device looks like a handheld breathalyzer machine and will test for various respiratory infections such as streptococcus, pneumococcus, hemophilus influenza, chickenpox and the common cold. The company



Guy LaTorre and Dr. Raj Attariwala of Breathtec and Dr. Hossam Haick, professor in Chemical Engineering and Nanotechnology at Technion Israel Institute of Technology | ROB KRUYT

said the device could also help cut the use of antibiotics due to its rapid identification of viruses and bacteria. LaTorre said there's also a chance this medical technology could also replace needles in many instances and speed up diagnosis for a variety of ailments.

"The initial trials [in Surrey] will be replacing laboratory samples, which usually take about three days to grow and culture," said LaTorre. "So instead of

waiting for three days to find out what's wrong with you, you can find out right away."

More than 40% of Surrey's population is foreign-born. A recent report by the **University of British Columbia**, Fraser Health and **Vancouver Coastal Health** noted that Caucasians (52%) make up the bulk of the population's ethnicity, followed by South Asians (23%), other (15%), Chinese (6%) and aboriginals (4%). LaTorre said this is great for

clinical trials as it will give them a wide cache of ethnic backgrounds from which to draw data.

Surrey-Tynehead MLA **Amrik Virk**, also the minister of Technology, Innovation and Citizens' Services, said the Breathtec trials coming to Innovation Boulevard is another win for Innovation Boulevard, increasing the exposure of the city's health-technology hub.

"You have the technology from Israel, the company from Florida,

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GUY LATORRE  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, BREATHTEC

and they're choosing Surrey for clinical trials," Virk said. "[We] have a very unique diversity. The world lives in our backyard, so when you want to find venues where you have incredible diversity, youth and all ages, Surrey is the best incubator for this."

Surrey Mayor **Linda Hepner** noted at the press conference that the city welcomes the clinical trials to its "growing stable of health technology specialist firms." ■



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