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'Game-changing' ultrasound robot wins venture capital backing

By **Emma Koehn**
September 14, 2021 — 5.00am

Local venture capital heavyweight Blackbird Ventures is backing an ultrasound robot designed to detect vascular diseases, that its founders say could be a game changer for treating some of the most common diseases in the country.

Dr John Carroll and Dr Eamonn Colley co-founded Vexev after completing their studies at the University of New South Wales, where they were looking at patient blood flows to predict conditions impacting arteries and veins, which can result in serious medical events like a heart attack or stroke.

The duo have now received support from Blackbird Ventures to build a device that automates ultrasound procedures and can produce 3D images just like a CT scan or MRI.

Dr John Carroll (left) and Dr Eamonn Colley, founders of Medtech Vexev.

After two years of "stealth mode", the business will emerge this month to start trials of the product at Eastern Suburbs Vascular Imaging at the Prince of Wales Hospital.

The company will test its product against existing technology used on patients in hopes of moving towards commercialisation.

Dr Carroll said he and Dr Colley, who have so far raised $1.5 million in venture capital funding, wanted to make a tool that would expand access to quick and effective health scans, including in regional areas.

"It was [about finding] a way for patients to get imaging with the lowest barriers to accessibility, that would make something like screening at scale possible," he said.

The duo arrived at the doorstep of Blackbird Ventures with the idea and "a laptop between the two of us" and have spent the past three years working on the prototype.

Vexev's flagship product, known as the "tomographic ultrasound robot", lets patients put their arm or leg on the device for a scan and will deliver a 3D picture of the patient's blood vessels.

It's hoped it will allow doctors to track signs of disease in the arteries and provide early intervention before a serious medical event takes place.

Dr Colley said the company was aiming to create tools that meant patients could be automatically scanned for illness even in cases where ultrasound technicians are in shortage.

"There is a world where anyone, anywhere, could essentially be able to get imaged or scanned, and we would be able to understand and maintain [their] optimal health," he said.

Vexev is joining a booming medical imaging sector, which has spawned local success stories like Pro Medicus. The ASX-listed cloud imaging company has turned its co-founders into billionaires and now has a market capitalisation of $6.4 billion.

Australia's diagnostic imaging services industry is worth $4 billion each year, according to industry research firm Ibisworld. While Vexev is still in early development, its founders are already considering its applications globally.

"Our goal is to put this device into the hands of as many people who need it. We are ambitious with this tech," Dr Colley said.

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