

Bath firm launched to develop 'ground-breaking' vaccine storage tech

A new company has been launched out of the University of Bath to develop "ground-breaking" technology designed to prevent vaccines from 'spoiling' during transportation.

Bio-tech spinout EnsilTech has been formed by chemistry researchers at the university who have been developing a new method which could allow for jabs to remain safe and effective at all temperatures.

Vaccines such as the Covid-19 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine have to be kept at very low temperatures, making them difficult to distribute around the world. Figures from the World Health Organisation suggest 50% of all doses are wasted.

EnsilTech chief executive Dr Asel Sartbaeva explained that at 8°C and above most vaccine proteins begin to unravel, degrading their effectiveness.

Dr Sartbaeva has been working on a process called ensilication for the past decade, which involves encasing a vaccine's active protein in a silica shell, or simple sand, in a bid to help it keep its structure when stored at room temperature or heated to 100°C.

EnsilTech will begin its operations at Dr Sartbaeva's lab at the University of Bath but will soon move to the Unit DX Science Incubator in Bristol – a laboratory facility targeted at start-up science and technology businesses.

Dr Sartbaeva said: "Our initial focus will be on oral animal vaccines, and we're hopeful that we'll have a finished product within two years. After that, our full attention will be on

human vaccines, antibodies and diagnostic proteins.”

Dr Sartbaeva was funded through government innovation body Innovate UK’s ICURe (Innovation to Commercialisation of University Research) programme, an initiative aimed at research teams from UK universities with commercially promising ideas.

Research commercialisation and the subsequent spin-out of EnsiliTech have been supported by the Technology Transfer team in Research and Innovation Services (RIS) at the University of Bath.

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