

Blood cancer tech firm wins innovation funding as LYVA Labs continues to focus on female entrepreneurs

A city region innovation fund has backed its fourth female-led business as it continues its mission to invest in “underserved founders and CEOs”.

Liverpool’s LYVA Labs has backed AI healthtech company Spotlight Pathology with £125k from its Health and Life Sciences pre-seed fund.

The backing came after Dr Samantha Perona joined the business as CEO. It will use the funding to accelerate product development and commercialisation.

Spotlight Pathology is developing AI tools to support pathologists in making complex blood cancer diagnoses. The company hopes its system will make their work more efficient and reduce delays in diagnosis at a time when there is a global shortage of highly-trained pathologists.

Spotlight Pathology was spun out of the University of Manchester in January 2020 by Dr Martin Fergie and Prof Richard Byers and recently moved to Sci-Tech Daresbury.

The company secured a £0.9m Innovate UK grant to help it build up a significant data bank of blood tissue samples. It recruited Dr Perona as CEO in April 2024, following her successful exit of Perfectus Biomed, which she grew from a start-up.

LYVA Labs was set up with £11M from Liverpool City Region’s Combined Authority as an innovation commercialisation company

to grow high-growth businesses that can create quality jobs. Its CEO, Lorna Green, chairs Liverpool City Region's [Female Founder Regional HIGH Growth Board](#), set up to support female entrepreneurs.

Dr Sam Perona, CEO Spotlight Pathology, said: "We are delighted to receive this investment from LYVA labs. The investment process was rapid and straight forward, allowing us to keep a focus on developing the business. This investment will allow us to grow the team and accelerate our 'Go to Market' plan. "

Akshay Bhatnagar, head of investment at LYVA Labs, said: "LYVA Labs is delighted to back Sam, Martin and Richard in their mission to help reduce the number of people dying from blood cancer by providing the technology to allow more rapid diagnosis which will enable earlier treatment for the condition. We look forward to working with the team and seeing the product come to market over the next 12 months."

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