

Diagnostics leader awarded £50,000 funding for ovarian cancer technology

A researcher at Queen's University Belfast spin-out GenoME Diagnostics has been awarded funding of £50,000 for its technology which provides more user friendly, accurate and cost-effective ovarian cancer tests.

The prize comes after Dr Shannon Beattie, the company's chief operating officer, was named a winner in Innovate UK's Women in Innovation Awards and comes with mentoring and other support.

She is one of 39 women across the UK to pick up the award which is designed to celebrate female entrepreneurs who have innovative ideas and ambitious plans that will inspire others.

"I am delighted and honoured to be part of the Women in Innovation Awards this year and to shine a spotlight on the need for early disease detection and the fantastic potential of the technology GenoME Diagnostics is developing," Dr Beattie said. "In summary, our main aim with this project is to improve the chance of survival for all ovarian cancer patients, while reducing the number of women who get a false positive reading and reduce stress for those patients and strain on stretched healthcare services.

"The support package associated with the award is a great opportunity to develop what we are doing and hone my own skills in business and taking academic innovations to market. It will also be invaluable to not only me but the company as it scales and launches the product to market."

GenoME Diagnostics' lead product, OvaME, is the novel blood test for earlier and more accurate detection of ovarian

cancer, specifically High Grade Serous Carcinoma (HGSC). It is currently undergoing the necessary validation for regulatory approval with the goal to enter the public health system as a disease monitoring tool.

HGSC is the most common and aggressive form of ovarian cancer, accounting for over 70% of cases, with early detection key for improved patient survival. However, the current ovarian cancer blood test CA125 is fraught with many well documented inaccuracies, being detectable in only half of all early stage ovarian cancers, and often elevated in other non-cancerous conditions. GenoME Diagnostics aims to combat these problems with its novel blood test.

“I am so pleased to hopefully be able to use this platform to inspire other young people to take the leap with their innovative ideas and chase their dreams with it. Like many others I definitely suffer from imposter syndrome almost every day, but this award has been great for my confidence and provided me with a level of validation which I simply have never had before.

“It is great to see a lot of reports coming out this year about the increase in women founded start-ups, particularly young women with over 14,000 businesses held by 16–25-year-olds in the UK last year. And hopefully that is a trend that can continue to grow, and we can see some of these start-ups coming through programmes like this in the next few years.”