Device Kills Head Lice In One 30-Minute Application

University of Utah

There are more than 10 million cases of head lice in the United States annually and more than 200 million globally, with 80 percent of the cases afflicting children. During the last five years the problem has increased dramatically because lice have developed widespread resistance to the pesticides used in both prescription and over-the-counter medications. In fact, head lice now cause almost twice the level of school absenteeism over asthma, the previous leading cause.

To fight this problem, in 2002-2003 University of Utah researchers developed the "Ectoparasite Eradication Method and Device." Professor Dale Clayton and students Joseph S. Atkin and Kevin G. Wilding showed that the chemical-free, hairdryer-like device eliminated head lice infestations by exterminating the eggs and killing enough lice to keep them from reproducing. More than $500,000 in funding from the State of Utah Centers of Excellence Program, the University of Utah and the National Science Foundation was used to develop and test the technology prior to licensing.

Marketed as LouseBuster™, the device blows warm, temperature-controlled air through a flexible

> *hose attached to a special applicator that kills lice and eggs by drying them out, not by heating them.*

The big advantages over existing treatment methods are that the process is pesticide- and chemical-free, requires only one treatment, has no side effects, and results in extremely high kill rates for both lice and eggs.

Experienced entrepreneurs licensed the technology from the University of Utah and created a spin-off company, Larada Sciences, to commercialize and market the device. Initial products will include the LouseBuster™ as well as single-use disposable kits for institutional sale to health care professionals. Key markets include schools, public and private health care providers, homeless shelters, the military, day-care facilities and smaller niches such as summer camps.

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