

IMMUNO-MYCOLOGICS INC.

Lifesaving Tests

For Norman's IMMY, simple does it for fungal disease diagnostics

There is a recurring theme in Sean Bauman's descriptions of the high-tech diagnostic tests developed at Norman's IMMY for potentially fatal fungal diseases around the world.

Keep it simple

Bauman, Ph.D., is president and CEO of IMMY, which is an acronym for Immuno-Mycologics Inc.

IMMY develops and manufactures diagnostic kits that are sold to hospitals and clinics across the globe. IMMY's simple kits diagnose certain types of fungal infections that are very serious, life-threatening illnesses. These fungal diseases can impact patients from the world's wealthiest to the poorest of countries.

"We're able to reach the Third World or the third shift here in the U.S. with the same test. It all operates on the same principle – keep it simple," Bauman said. "That's actually how we got our start, developing diagnostic tests that are simple and could address the problem in the resource limited countries."

In emerging nations without infrastructure and with a large population with compromised immune systems – like the many HIV-positive citizens of sub-Saharan Africa – fungal diseases can be deadly.

"It's not that these infections are not common in the United States," Bauman said. "In the U.S., we've got laboratory infrastructures already in place to handle those types of illnesses."

The main advantage of labs utilizing IMMY's rapid tests is that accurate treatment can begin sooner in the disease lifecycle, in some cases even before it becomes fungal meningitis.

IMMY operates out of a 45,000 square foot, state-of-the-art facility that opened in 2016 in far north Norman near the Max Westheimer Airport. It employs 70 people.

Stan Bauman, Ph.D., Bauman's father and an OU graduate, founded IMMY in a barn in Goldsby in 1979. Sean Bauman and his brother Scott, the company's chief operating officer, bought the business from their father in 2004.

"IMMY has a really cool story," Sean Bauman said. "My brother and I grew up in it and literally ran the halls of this company from as young as we can remember. It was literally started in a metal barn out in the middle of nowhere."

In 2008, IMMY released its breakthrough diagnostic test, CrAg® LFA, for the detection of Cryptococcosis, an infection of the lining of the spinal cord and brain.

"We developed this little test to detect fungal meningitis," Sean Bauman said. "It's built on the same technology that a pregnancy test is built on. Our vision is that we go out and dominate fungal infection."



“We’re going to do that by saving lives one diagnostic at a time.”

Today, IMMY’s simple diagnostics reach patients in more than 60 countries across the world. Wealthy nations and not-for-profit organizations often pay for the diagnostics that are distributed to Third World countries.

“In the poor countries, this type of product is paid for by the benevolence of First World countries,” Bauman said. “The U.S. is a prime giver in the fight against HIV and AIDS.”

Now, IMMY is preparing to launch a menu of new products that target three different diseases. IMMY’s R&D staff developed simple diagnostics that can detect infections known as Valley Fever, Histoplasmosis and Aspergillosis.

“Valley Fever is a big problem in the southwestern United States,” Bauman said. “We built a simple test that takes 30 minutes to perform and can be run out of any basic laboratory. The current diagnosis takes about 90 days for you to be accurately diagnosed, and it’s a referral lab test. We bent the curve down from 90 days to 30 minutes.”

Histoplasmosis plagues South American populations where it accounts for 40 percent of the deaths of HIV patients in that area. Histoplasmosis is also endemic in the U.S. Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys.

“We’re talking big numbers,” Bauman said. “And the reason it is unrecognized is because it is undiagnosed.”

Aspergillosis is a fungal disease that plagues people who already have underlying illnesses such as cancer, tuberculosis or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

“You breathe in spores from Aspergillosis nearly every breath,” Bauman said. “The problem is transplant patients or cancer patients have their immune system blown up, so to speak, so they can receive a transplant or chemotherapy for their cancer. Well, that leaves them vulnerable to organisms like Aspergillosis that infect you via the airways.”

Each of IMMY’s new diagnostic tests is tied together by a common thread.

“I tell you, the lesson we learned in Africa,” Bauman said. “Keep it simple. We’re trying to bring that to every test that we do.”

[Read the article in the 11-3-17 Oklahoman](#)

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