



## Cambridge Innovation Capital invests in Z Factor as part of £7 million Series A funding to bring lung treatment to the clinic

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Z Factor Limited, a University of Cambridge spin-out company, has completed a £7 million Series A investment led by existing investor Medicxi. Cambridge Enterprise and Cambridge Innovation Capital have also joined in the founding round. Founded by Jim Huntington, Professor of Molecular Haemostasis at the Cambridge Institute for Medical Research, Z Factor previously raised undisclosed seed funding from Medicxi.

The Z Factor team is engaged in the discovery of new drugs to treat Alpha-1-Antitrypsin Deficiency (AATD). "AATD, which is a significant cause of liver and lung disease, results from a defect in the gene encoding Alpha-1-antitrypsin" said Professor Huntington. "Individuals with two defective copies of the gene, making up around 1 in 2000 of the Western population, typically develop emphysema starting in their 30s. They are also at an increased risk of developing liver diseases such as cirrhosis and cancer. Around 2% of people have one defective copy of this gene, and are at 5-fold increased risk of developing Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) as they age."

The most common mutation causing AATD is called the Z mutation, which disrupts the normal folding of the protein. Professor Huntington and his team at University of Cambridge obtained the crystallographic structure of this mutant form of Alpha-1-antitrypsin, which allowed for the first time the rational design of drugs that could correct folding and prevent the development of associated diseases. "These small molecule drugs act like molecular chaperones for the defective protein, accelerating folding to the correct native state" said Nigel Ramsden at RxCelera, who together with David Fox, is leading the drug discovery effort for Z Factor.

Z Factor has already identified dozens of molecules that can correct the folding defect caused by the Z mutation, and shown that some of these drug candidates can increase Alpha-1-antitrypsin levels in an *in vivo* model of AATD. The company is now working to select the best molecules for use as a drug in human trials. "The existing molecules clearly work well in model systems" said David Fox. "The next challenge is to create molecules that will work safely in human clinical trials." The company expects to reach the clinic with its lead candidate in 2019.

Following closely on the announcement of investments in ApcinteX and SuperX earlier this year, the Z Factor Series A brings the total raised during 2017 by companies founded by Professor Huntington, one of Cambridge's most successful serial entrepreneurs, to almost £30 million.

Z Factor is based on the Babraham Research Campus, just south of Cambridge, UK. It operates as a virtual biotechnology company, with no internal operations, using an established network of out-sourced drug discovery and development providers, including RxCelera, co-located on the Babraham campus.

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**About Cambridge Innovation Capital**     [www.cicplc.co.uk](http://www.cicplc.co.uk)

CIC combines a unique relationship with the University of Cambridge with deep financial and industry links to invest in rapidly growing intellectual property rich companies in the Cambridge Cluster. The company is committed to building leading businesses from brilliant technologies - with the support of some of the most influential figures in the sector and a patient capital structure.

For more information visit [www.cicplc.co.uk](http://www.cicplc.co.uk) or follow @CamsInnovation

**About Cambridge Enterprise**     [www.enterprise.cam.ac.uk](http://www.enterprise.cam.ac.uk)

A wholly owned subsidiary of the University of Cambridge, Cambridge Enterprise Limited is responsible for the commercialisation of University intellectual property. It provides access to early stage capital through the Cambridge Enterprise Seed Funds, University of Cambridge Enterprise Funds and Cambridge Enterprise Venture Partners, and offers business planning, mentoring and related programmes. Activities include management and licensing of intellectual property and patents, proof of concept funding and support for University staff and research groups wishing to provide expert advice or facilities to public and private sector organisations.

**About Medicxi**     [www.medicxi.com](http://www.medicxi.com)

Medicxi is a life sciences focused venture capital firm, spun out of Index Ventures in 2016. One of Europe's largest dedicated life sciences VC firms, Medicxi has offices in London, Jersey and Geneva. Past and existing portfolio companies include GenMab (Copenhagen: [GEN.CO](http://GEN.CO)), PanGenetics (acquired by Abbott), Minerva Neurosciences (Nasdaq: [NERV](http://NERV)), Egalet (Nasdaq: [EGLT](http://EGLT)), Molecular Partners (Swiss: MOLN. SW), Versartis (Nasdaq: [VSAR](http://VSAR)), Levicept, XO1 (acquired by J&J), MorphogenIX and Gadeta.

For more information on our investments, please visit us at [Medicxi](http://Medicxi) and connect with us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com) and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com)

**About RxCelerate**     [www.rxcelerate.com](http://www.rxcelerate.com)

RxCelerate is a rapidly-growing out-sourced drug discovery and development service provider, based at Babraham Research Campus. RxCelerate provides the chemistry and biology infrastructure to allow asset-owners to discover and develop high value pharmaceuticals, and has clients ranging from academic groups, to small biotech companies with a handful of employees, up to global pharmaceutical companies. Founded in 2013, RxCelerate offers a unique model for out-sourcing R&D.

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**About Babraham Research Campus** [www.babraham.com](http://www.babraham.com)

[Babraham Bioscience Technologies Ltd](http://www.babraham.com) (BBT) is responsible for the commercial development of the Babraham Research Campus. The Babraham Research Campus is distinct in its co-location of bioscience companies with the [Babraham Institute](http://www.babraham.com), a world-renowned research organisation. The Campus provides companies laboratory and office space together with access to outstanding scientific facilities in an ideal geographical location at the core of the Cambridge cluster.

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