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CSTAR roundtable establishes innovative collaboration with industry

BY JOHN PARKER

Established in 2004, CSTAR (Canadian Surgical Technologies & Advanced Robotics), a program of London Health Sciences Centre, is a 23,000 square foot facility that closes the gap between medical device innovation and clinical implementation through advanced research, validation and simulation education programming. The goal of closing this gap is improved patient care. This programming is made possible through the active and collaborative engagement of CSTAR's medical device community, which is comprised of scientists, engineers, multi-disciplinary clinicians, educators, administrators, students and industry members from London, Ontario and across Canada.

While this diversity lies at the heart of successful medical device innovation, it also sets the stage for a sophisticated business model with a number of complex relationships. Of these, perhaps none poses greater challenges than the relationship between CSTAR's medical device community and industry. Escalating costs of medical device technologies, growing pressures to validate new medical device technologies and reduce time to market, accelerating impact on clinician training

requirements and emergent issues such as rapidly developing changes in corporate compliance guidelines, all set the stage for a multi-faceted relationship.

"To address these challenges and, acknowledging that industry is a valued member of this diverse and ever-changing community, we established our CSTAR Industry Roundtable as a transparent venue that enables open and collaborative interaction of CSTAR's medical device community with its industry partners", says Dr. John Denstedt,

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chief/chair of the Department of Surgery, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and senior medical director, surgery services, LHSC. "The roundtable provides both parties meaningful opportunities to identify and collaboratively address current and emergent issues, challenges and opportunities as they relate to medical device research, validation and simulation education", says Dr. Denstedt, who co-chairs the roundtable.

The first meeting of CSTAR's Industry Roundtable took place January 2007 at CSTAR and the group has reconvened every six months thereafter. "Being a new venue in 2007, without precedent that we were aware of at the time, the roundtable focused its first few meetings on identifying how best we can work together", says co-chair Kirsten Krull-Naraj, integrated vice president, surgery services, LHSC. "The roundtable has definitely matured over the course of its past two meetings and real opportunities for collaboration are beginning to emerge", says Krull-Naraj.

The focus of CSTAR's Industry Roundtable on improving patient outcomes is expressed by Jean Rousseau, vice president strategic affairs, Johnson & Johnson Medical Products: "The CSTAR Industry Roundtable is a very productive vehicle to harness the industry's interest for innovation and breakthrough technologies with the needs of the healthcare environment to assess and implement them. This is a forum for truthful and transparent discussions between academia, healthcare organizations and industry partners sharing the same focus: the patient."

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in 2009. Industry representation on the Roundtable includes senior leadership of international (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, Medtronic, IBM) and Ontario-based (Trudell Medical Ltd., Quanser Inc., ORION) medical device and information technology companies. Representation on the roundtable has recently expanded and diversified to include Health Canada, Ontario's Ministries of Health and Long Term Care and Research and Innovation and the London Economic Development Corporation.

"The CSTAR Roundtable is an excellent venue for fostering collaboration between industry and the medical research community. It provides an opportunity to share clinical, technical and market perspectives to identify and address opportunities to improve patient care and health-care efficiency", says George T. Baran, vice-chair, Trudell Medical Group. Baran goes on to say that "this intellectual capital is combined with the resources of both CSTAR and industry to create technologies, services, and training opportunities that have both clinical value and commercialization potential."

These comments are echoed by Paul Gilbert, CEO of Ontario-based Quanser Inc. "I find the CSTAR Industrial Roundtable to be an excellent, and refreshing,

opportunity to candidly share insight into the developing market for medical robotics. Attendance at these meetings has provided our company with more confidence that our research and development work can be commercialized successfully through collaboration with a network of people with very complementary skills and experiences."

In addition to providing an effective venue to identify opportunities for collaborative medical device research, validation

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and education, the Roundtable has enabled its membership to identify and address emergent issues and challenges. "Clearly, health technology assessment is emerging as a priority for those involved in medical device technology acquisition decision-making", says Krull-Naraj.

"We saw the January 2009 roundtable meeting as a perfect opportunity to address this emergent issue and invited Dr. Les Levin, senior medical advisor to the minister, head medical advisory secre-

tariat, MOHLTC, to address the membership regarding the implications of health technology assessment for industry. Dr. Levin's presentation has effectively set the stage for meaningful and ongoing dialogue with our industry partners of this critical issue".

Emerging issues relating to policy have similarly been identified through CSTAR's Industry Roundtable. "Recent and ongoing changes in corporate compliance guidelines are fundamentally affecting the health care community/industry relationship and have important implications for medical device research, philanthropy, continuing medical education and purchasing", says Dr. Denstedt.

"In consultation with our roundtable partners, we identified the need for a meeting of key national and provincial stakeholders to address the issue of corporate compliance, which we are planning to take place at CSTAR later in 2009. Our roundtable enables us to address rapid developments, such as this, in a timely and effective manner", says Dr. Denstedt.

To learn more about the CSTAR Industry Roundtable and its membership, please visit CSTAR's website by clicking: http://www.lhsc.on.ca/About_Us/CSTAR/index.htm, or contact John Parker, Director of CSTAR (john.parker@lhsc.on.ca).

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