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£20 million scheme to take medical research from bench to bedside

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The Universities of Birmingham and Warwick have been jointly awarded almost £20 million to develop the world-class medical research undertaken at both institutions into practical applications for patient care.

The Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands, has funded the Translational Medicine scheme as part of the Science City initiative, which draws together industry, business, education and the public sector, to establish the West Midlands region as a centre for world-class scientific research.

The two Universities have led different elements of the Translational Medicine scheme to follow research from basic science into new treatments for the region's patients.

The University of Birmingham has been awarded £9.855 million to develop world class biomedical research, with a focus on encouraging greater collaboration between scientists and industry.

The funding secured from AWM will support a number of projects including the development of a dedicated human tissue biorepository at Birmingham, and the refurbishment of laboratories at Warwick.

The University of Warwick has been awarded £9.875 million to take new medical developments into clinical trials, significantly expanding international quality clinical trials activity in the region. This part of the project will fund the building of a new Clinical Trials building at Warwick and the refurbishment of facilities at the University of Birmingham, enabling expansion of existing clinical trials activity.

A mobile clinical trials unit is also being funded which will visit regional GP surgeries and hospitals where facilities for clinical research do not exist.

The West Midlands has the largest concentration of clinical trials activity in Europe, with the ethnically diverse population of the region being a significant attraction to companies who need to recruit such populations onto trials.

The new project will help to expand the regions trials capacity, cementing the West Midlands as a leading centre for this crucial area of medical research.

Business Partnership Managers will be established at both institutions who will facilitate collaborative research activities between the universities and regional and national pharmaceutical and biomedical companies and other related bodies.

Nick Paul, Chairman at Advantage West Midlands said: "Birmingham Science City is about demonstrating how the science and technology in West Midlands Universities can improve the quality of life of people in the region and support local businesses. This project will not only help to attract significant inward investment to the region but will also help to attract and retain skilled graduates and postgraduates."

Professor Lawrence Young Head of the College of Medical and Dental Sciences at the University of Birmingham comments: "This collaboration has the potential to provide tremendous benefits for patients across the West Midlands. By combining the expertise at our two Universities we are in a great position to turn high quality biomedical research into innovative treatments for problems like obesity and heart disease."

Professor Yvonne Carter, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Regional Engagement and Dean of Warwick Medical School said: "This is fantastic news for Science City. This collaboration, involving as it does two major research universities and the NHS, is quite unprecedented and represents an exciting new opportunity for a vastly-expanded engagement with industry."

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