
Ohio Third Frontier awards \$1.9 million to Cuyahoga County businesses, institutions to combat opioid epidemic

Updated Jan 11, 2019; Posted Dec 08, 2017

Six businesses and institutions in Cuyahoga County were awarded funds from the state to fight the opioid epidemic. (Lisa DeJong/The Plain Dealer)

By Ginger Christ, The Plain Dealer

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Ohio Third Frontier awarded \$1.9 million to businesses and institutions in Cuyahoga County to fight the opioid epidemic.

"This is an opportunity to save lives," David Goodman, director of the Ohio Development Services Agency and chair of the Ohio Third Frontier Commission, said in a news release. The funds awarded are part of a \$20 million commitment the state is making to fight opioid abuse through new solutions and technology.

In Cuyahoga County, 666 people died of drug overdoses last year, and that number is expected to climb to 825 this year, according to the county medical examiner's office.

Brad Pulver, president of Innovative Medical Equipment, is working to reduce dependence on opioids through his company's **ThermaZone** device, a thermoelectric device that uses heating and cooling to treat post-surgery pain.

"We're really excited to be part of this fight against opioids," Pulver said.

The device has been on the market for five years, mostly as a means to reduce pain and swelling after orthopedic surgery but has recently started being used by doctors looking for substitutes to opioids for pain management, Pulver said.

The \$177,000 grant from Third Frontier will allow the company to begin clinical trials at University Hospitals to prove that the device can be used as an alternative to painkillers, Pulver said. He expects trials to begin in early 2018.

Brian Bailys, who launched Ascent with drug addiction treatment center New Directions, is creating a mobile community for those in recovery. With the \$464,000 grant from Third Frontier, Ascent in early 2018 plans to launch a new addiction and mental health recovery app that connect those with addiction to peer coaches who are in recovery.

"It gives people a safe and stigma-free environment. They're communicating with people just like them," said Bailys, who has personally experienced addiction.

The locally funded initiatives include:

Case Western Reserve University: \$500,000 for the Case Western Reserve University Technology Validation and Start-up Fund.

The Cleveland Clinic Foundation: \$500,000 for the Cleveland Clinic's Technology Validation and Start-up Fund.

Ascent in Cleveland: \$464,000 to launch a mobile-based, 24-hour hotline "connecting individuals in recovery with peer coaches to support their recovery and connect them to resources."

Innovative Medical Equipment: \$177,000 "to validate the use of a thermoelectric device (**ThermaZone**) to deliver targeted heating and cooling therapy as a substitute for opioids in treating chronic and post-operative pain."

Enhale Medical Inc.: \$150,000 "to further develop an implantable neurostimulation device to alleviate sleep apnea."

Sotera Medical Corp.: \$150,000 "to further develop a temporary protective device that is inserted in the esophagus of patients undergoing treatment for atrial fibrillation."

This story was updated to correct the amount of funding the state is dedicating to fight opioid abuse through technology.

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