

Biotech Daily's CEO interview

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TESTING TB AND PROSTATE CANCER PROTEOME'S STEPHEN PORGES

Proteome chief executive officer Stephen Porges has embarked on a series of investor presentations, primarily to describe his company rather than raise funds.

Beginning in Sydney yesterday and in Melbourne today, Mr Porges will go to Europe in May and attend a bio-terrorism conference in New York in June.

He told Biotech Daily that Proteome did not need to raise more money. He said that last year the US Government gave the company \$25 million over five years to assist in developing counter measures to radiation. Proteome will work with the Henry Ford Foundation, the University of Wisconsin and the University of Toronto on the project.

Proteome specialises in developing tests for antibodies. Two products in the pipeline are a three-minute saliva test for active tuberculosis and a semen test for prostate cancer.

Mr Porges said that his company's tuberculosis tests were cheaper and more sensitive than existing tests and were being developed with the World Health Organisation for use in the developing world, where 300 million tests are conducted each year.

"The tests are royalty-free, but not margin-free, so the margin from the tests will be greater than our present market capitalisation in two to three years," Mr Porges said. Proteome's present market capitalisation, not including escrowed shares, is \$40 million.

He said competitor tests need laboratory analysis and by the time they were completed the subjects may have disappeared. He said the saliva test takes three minutes.

Mr Porges said the importance of the semen-based prostate test was that most men die with the slow-growing cancer, but large numbers have painful and expensive biopsies that turn out to be negative.

"Forty percent of 40-year olds have the start of prostate cancer and 70 percent of 70-year olds have it. One in six are diagnosed. Most die with it and it makes no difference." He said the present initial test for the prostate specific antigen recorded a level of prostate activity, which could be adversely affected if the patient had recently had sex. He said a high level meant that patients would require a biopsy of which he said 75 percent were negative. "It's a waste of money and pain," Mr Porges said. He said Proteome's semen test detected the human carcinoma antigen and if it was there, the patient has cancer.

He said that Australian biotechnical companies were constantly challenged to know which other companies - worldwide - were doing the same things. He said Australian biotechs needed the right partners and that generally meant big pharmaceutical companies, most of which are not based in Australia. He observed the main problems facing the Australian biotechnical sector were money and management.

Proteome has been profiled in the current edition of business magazine BRW and is the subject of an article in today's Australian Financial Review. Both publications discuss the fall and recovery of Proteome as a listed company.

[Proteome fell one cent or 2.38 percent to 41 cents.](#)