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Perspective

Looking Ahead to 2015--"The Decades of the Brain"

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Abstract

Brain monitoring in 2015 seems very exciting, not because of the multinationals but rather as a result of the push and pull effect of the small start-up companies that are looking outside accepted paradigms to bring to the hospital scene new and innovative devices. While the large traded companies are adding small updates and more "bells and whistles" not really needed in the NICU and OR, foreign startups like Ornim from Israel are bringing easy to sue and noninvasive equipment which is starting to change the face of hospital practice.

Keywords: *Ornim; Massimo, Casmed; Noninvasive monitoring; c-FLOW; Cerebral Monitoring; Decade of the Brain; Neuro Critical Care Society (NCCS); American Society of Anesthesiology (ASA); Cerebral Brain Flow Monitor; Gary Sagiv; Israel Schreiber; Israel*

Where is the medical device technology market going in 2015? It's an especially challenging question in the post-Obama healthcare world. While it seemed that the med tech world was gearing up for the "Obama Brain Initiative", with a few exceptions, there has been nothing new. The Masimo Root Patient Monitoring System or the Casmed Foresight Elite Absolute Cerebral Oximeter are more of the same with little actual improvement.

The leading multi-national companies have not brought anything new to market recently. International shows such as the Neuro Critical Care Society (NCCS) and the American Society of Anesthesiology (ASA) seemed to have no breakthrough potentials even for the future from the majors.

The smaller companies are the ones bringing innovative products to the field. Neuro-interventionists and anesthesiologists are pointing to the Israeli start-up, Ornim, Inc. (ornim.com), as the next major innovator in cerebral technology.

Based in Foxboro, Mass., with research and development facilities in Kfar Saba, Israel, Ornim is the first company to move away from the standard paradigm of cerebral oximetry to monitor blood flow in the brain. The device shines safe, near infrared laser light combined with pulses of ultrasound to create a Doppler-like effect that reveals blood flowing through deep tissue.

While there are other technologies that measure cerebral blood flow, none of them have the distinction of being non-invasive and continuous to provide real-time monitoring. As such, the c-FLOW Cerebral Brain Flow Monitor (ornim.com/c-flow) was the most innovative product at both the NCS and ASA conferences, touted by some of the nation's leading physicians and technologists.

Lead by chief executive officer Israel Schreiber, a veteran of ITGI Medical and Itamar Medical Ltd., Ornim is investing heavily in the U.S. market after being invited by Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick to open facilities in the state.

The company is funded by OrbiMed Healthcare Fund, GE Healthymagination Fund, Agate Medical Investments LP and other leading venture capital funds. As the company is not publicly traded, no sales figures are available. Nonetheless, reputable figures in the industry have pointed to the deployment of the c-FLOW in some of the top 50 hospitals in the U.S. as a sign of continuing success. Gary Sagiv, Ornim vice president of global marketing and sales, formerly of ITGI and Itamar Medical as well, said in a phone conversation that the strategy of the company was to take blood pressure management from "guessing" to "knowing" with the use of UTLight technology the company offers. "We are able to monitor a wide range of medical complications and issues in diverse clinical settings, including stroke, subarachnoid hemorrhage, bypass, shoulder surgery, CPR and more".

"I am most excited by the ability of the c-FLOW to assist in IV-TPA during stroke therapy", said Sagiv. "For the first time the physician has the ability to know exactly if and when the clot dissolves. The physician can then tailor the therapy to the specific need".

Individualized medicine is the name of the game today and Ornim seems to be leading the pack. "By using our device, early detection of difficulties that can occur during surgery or post-op can be reduced, decreasing complication rates and saving patient lives".

Sagiv noted that in an article in the New England Journal of Medicine, Dr. Wesley Ely found that ICU-related brain injury could be prevented if the duration of delirium in the ICU is shortened. "That is our aim at Ornim – to reduce the patient's stay in the ICU and decrease future cognitive problems. At the same time, this should reduce health costs through shorter length of stay". "With our breakthrough technology, the hospital's clinical teams are able-for the first time-to have an immediate indication of the state of perfusion of the patient at the bedside".

Ornim's "out of the box" approach to medical procedures has been their hallmark. As such, the company is in synch with the times. This course of action seems to be the signature of both Schreiber and Sagiv whose track record of introducing innovative technologies has been most successful over the years (Itamar Medical is a fine example).

Individualized medicine and non-invasive technologies are some of the hottest topics being discussed today-with good reason. The recent medical examiner's report on Joan Rivers' death said that the late actress died from anoxic encephalopathy due to hypoxic arrest-a deprivation of oxygen that lead to brain damage.

As such, the question for her-and for so many others-becomes "Could the use of the c-FLOW have saved her life?" I know, that if I had to go into the hospital today, I would demand the use of this c-FLOW monitor!

Discussion

These small companies with relatively limited resources are to bring the change to this field.

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