



# Bringing Home the Diagnostics

The *EMDT* Five Minute Interview series offers personal perspectives on the diverse and dynamic medical device technology industry. Here, we talk to John Curtis, CEO of Microvisk Technologies.

**Q If I were not talking to you now, what would you be doing?**

**A:** Getting on with a range of tasks as CEO of a growing company.

**Q How did you get in the industry?**

**A** When I left university in 1973, I joined the medical diagnostics department of Behringwerke AG in Marburg, Germany—it was probably the foremost medical diagnostics company in the world at that time—and have stayed in the medical diagnostics industry ever since.

**Q: What is the best thing about your work?**

**A:** Inventing products and then bringing them to market.

**Q: What's so great about your company's technology?**

**A:** In the 1980s, Medisense completely changed the blood glucose testing paradigm by inventing the world's first solid-state test for glucose. For the first time, glucose tests became simple, accurate, low-blood-volume tests that could be carried out by anyone at home. That market is now worth at least US\$10 billion.

In a different market, but with similar market forces, Microvisk Technologies is the world's first solid-state test for blood coagulation, a test that the US Centres for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) recommends should be carried out weekly on all users of the anti-coagulant drug Warfarin, which represents approximately 7 million people in the United States and Europe. This technology brings the same levels of ergonomic simplicity, test accuracy and low blood volume to the blood coagulation market that the first solid-state glucose tests brought to the glucose market.

Although there are two other blood coagulation, or INR, tests in the market, neither of these is seen as sufficiently simple or robust enough to be used at home in the same way as glucose testing. For that reason, although home coagulation testing for people 65 and older is universally paid for by CMS, only around 1% of the potential number of US home testers have been certified by doctors for home use. This means that patients have to visit a clinic each



**John Curtis** is CEO of Microvisk Technologies, which has developed a handheld system to monitor the blood clotting status of patients taking the drug Warfarin. Microvisk will launch its Smartstrip product on the UK market this autumn. Product launches are scheduled in the United States and Germany during 2012. Curtis can be contacted by phone at +44 845 956 9900 or via e-mail, [emmakeefe@microvisk.com](mailto:emmakeefe@microvisk.com). Visit the company website at [www.microvisk.com](http://www.microvisk.com).

week or, as happens more often, they do not get monitored to the optimal level.

The simplicity, accuracy and low blood volume of Microvisk's technology will resolve that problem by bringing a greater level of care and stroke and thrombo-embolic event prevention to the 4 million Warfarin users in the United States.

**Q What do you think is the most important medical device invention ever?**

**A** The stethoscope.

**Q What should people give more attention to?**

**A** The use of diagnostic tests in the home environment.

**Q What is the most exciting development on the horizon?**

**A** As the technology becomes available, the development of home diagnostic hubs that allow people to carry out simple monitoring tests for a variety of conditions. The results can then be transmitted back to a central location and computer analysed to check for results out of the normal range. Out-of-range results are flagged to the general physician for follow-up and action.

**Q What do you want from your suppliers?**

**A** On-time deliveries to the agreed specification, competitive pricing, attention to detail and focused and rapid cooperation to resolve issues when things don't go to plan.

Are you interested in more views on what is the most important device invention ever or what developments are on the horizon? Our interviewees work in different sectors and locations of

the industry and offer a variety of perspectives. See previous interviews in the Five Minute Interview series at [www.emdt.co.uk/departments/five-minute-interview](http://www.emdt.co.uk/departments/five-minute-interview)