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## Published Article

# Theken Surgical Launches Spinal Implant

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Theken Surgical, a Barberton-based medical device company, is launching a device to repair damaged cervical vertebrae in the spine.

The patented device, called the Tether System, resembles a toolbox full of screws, screwdrivers and hinges. But the Tether System has a larger purpose than fixing a door or repairing a car.

It's full of titanium plates that are implanted onto a patient's spine to fuse the cervical vertebrae together.

A surgeon at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron recently used the Tether System to repair a patient's degenerative cervical spinal disk, said Richard Navarro, vice president of engineering and new technology for Theken Surgical. The surgeon did not return two phone calls from CrainTech.

The successful surgery was the first of about 30 similar surgeries that will happen this month in hospitals nationwide using the Tether System, Mr. Navarro said.

If the surgeries go well, Theken Surgical plans to launch the implant fully at the North American Spine Society conference in Seattle in October. The conference will provide heavy exposure because more than 100 other spinal-related exhibitors will be there, Mr. Navarro said.

Theken Surgical is named for its founder, Randall Theken. Mr. Theken is a Northeast Ohio native with degrees in electrical and mechanical engineering from the University of Akron. He became interested in spinal implants during his master's thesis.

After graduation, Mr. Theken tested medical implants for a company in Columbus. He moved back to Northeast Ohio in 1994 and purchased 36 acres of deforested land in Barberton to start a medical device testing company, Theken Orthopaedic. Four years later, he founded Theken Surgical to develop and market implants.

Theken Surgical's development process is shortened because it has the advantage of having Theken Orthopaedic's testing facility on site.

The Tether system is the second of three products that Theken Surgical has agreed to develop and market during a five-year period with the Surgical Dynamics Division of Tyco, a New Haven, Conn.-based distribution giant. The first product, Body Form, helps fuse together the lumbar and thoracic vertebrae.

Having fulfilled 2/3 of its agreement with the Surgical Dynamics Division, Theken Surgical is developing the third product. Theken Surgical would not disclose its plans for the product, but Mr. Navarro said it is an "advanced spinal implant" with an untapped billion-dollar market in the United States.

Theken Surgical has applied for a \$100,000 grant from the National Institute of Health to fund development of the advanced spinal implant. It expects to know how it scored on the grant proposal by the end of July.

"If we get funding, it will certainly give credibility to investors and attract investors," Mr. Navarro said. Theken Surgical would need between \$1 million and \$2 million to begin clinical development of the product, Mr. Navarro said. But the company may not seek funding from outside investors if it can finance the clinical development with sales from its other products.

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