



Medtronic Buys Ardian for \$800M Upfront, Grabs Novel Treatment for High Blood Pressure

Luke Timmerman 11/23/10

It didn't take [Ardian](#) long to cash in once it [showed the world what it really has come up with for the treatment of high blood pressure](#).

Medical device giant Medtronic (NYSE: [MDT](#)) [said](#) it has agreed to pay \$800 million upfront, plus commercial milestone payments through 2015, to acquire Mountain View, CA-based [Ardian](#). Medtronic had previously built up an 11 percent ownership stake in Ardian, when it invested with its venture backers, which include Morgenthaler Ventures, Advanced Technology Ventures, Split Rock Partners, and Emergent Medical Partners.

Ardian's windfall comes about one week after it [presented some eye-opening clinical trial results](#) in *The Lancet*, and at the American Heart Association's scientific meeting. The company showed it could significantly reduce blood pressure among patients who were on an average of five existing medications and still couldn't get their scores down to a manageable level, researchers said.

The Ardian method, which works unlike anything else on the market today, uses a catheter to deliver radio-frequency waves to shut down overactive nerves near the kidneys, suspected to be one cause of what's known as "resistant hypertension." About 74 million Americans are thought to have high blood pressure, and an estimated one-fifth of them fail to keep it under control. The worldwide market for high blood pressure drugs is worth about \$30 billion, Ardian says.

Shutting down overactive nerves around the kidneys as a strategy for fighting resistant hypertension is "one of the most exciting growth markets in medical devices," Sean Salmon, vice president and general manager of Medtronic's coronary and peripheral business, said in a statement.

I had a piece in these pages last week about what kind of difference the Ardian treatment was making. The most recent Ardian study showed the new treatment, in combination with standard drugs, was able to bring average blood pressure scores down from 178 over 97 to 146 over 85 after six months of follow-up, while those who just got standard treatments were essentially unchanged. The results were "a big achievement," according to Murray Esler, the study's principal investigator.

Not everyone responded the same way. About 85 percent of patients experienced at least a 10 point drop in the systolic blood pressure score (the top number), which is a benchmark for success with blood pressure medicines, Esler said. About 39 percent of the patients on the Ardian treatment had their systolic scores drop to 140 or below—which is considered the goal—while 10 percent of patients didn't experience any drop.

Medtronic still has more work left to do before it can win FDA approval to start selling the product, called the Symplicity Catheter System. Ardian CEO Andrew Cleeland told me last week that his company was planning to consult with the FDA about the next step, a 300-patient, placebo-controlled study that he hoped to get started before the end of March.

Ardian was founded in 2003 with seed funding from Morgenthaler. The sale to Medtronic now represents the firm's largest exit from a medical device investment, general partner Robert Bellas told VentureWire. The company raised \$66 million altogether, VentureWire said.

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