

# PHILIPPINE DAILY BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS INQUIRER



NEWS

## SPARE LOTTO FROM CLOSURE, SAYS LACSON

A8

### BIOTECHNOLOGY AND LIFE SCIENCES

## MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS—GOOD NEWS FROM ISRAEL

From gene to cell therapies to noninvasive brain procedures to wearable devices for the blind, the birthplace of Jesus Christ prides itself as a 'startup nation'

By Michael Lim Ubac  
@Inq\_Lifestyle

HAIFA, ISRAEL—A revolutionary treatment using cells extracted from the placenta to cure muscle trauma or inflammation, ischemia (inadequate blood flow), hip fractures and, possibly, cancer, could soon be made accessible to patients around the world.

A major breakthrough in cell therapy has transformed this medical "waste"—placenta is usually discarded right after a mother gives birth—into a cure, thanks to extensive research and development done by scientists at Pluristem Therapeutics.

An Israeli company, Pluristem uses cell therapy products to stimulate the body's own regenerative mechanism.

"Placenta cells create blood vessels ... bringing new cells to push the body to regenerate," said Efrat Kaduri, head of Pluristem's investor and public relations department.

"Placenta is an organ that develops with the baby, said Kaduri, stressing that placenta-derived cells are not only "ethically accepted" but seems to have "unlimited source" and "easy to collect," too.

Pluristem can manufacture treatments for over 20,000 patients per placenta.

The cells are frozen after extraction and subsequently stored. Some of Pluristem's products will be made available in commercial quantities this year ([www.pluristem.com](http://www.pluristem.com)).

This medical breakthrough is another feather in Israel's cap.

#### Medical superpower

Relatively a small country in the Middle East, Israel prides itself as a "startup nation" because of a well-funded and

thriving innovation ecosystem credited for its breakneck-paced advances in biotechnology and life sciences.

From gene to cell therapies, gene editing, noninvasive brain procedures to wearable assistive devices for the blind, Israel—the birthplace of Jesus Christ and Christianity—is right on track to becoming a global medical superpower.

Last December, foreign journalists and startup entrepreneurs from around the world descended on the Municipality of Haifa as guests of "Start Haifa," a program designed to showcase the state-supported innovation ecosystem in Israel.

Along with nine other journalists from Asia, Europe and South America, I covered the seven-day event. Haifa is one of Israel's northern territories facing the Mediterranean Sea.

"Israel is a world-known leader in medical innovation, with inventions like PillCam capsule (for wireless capsule endoscopy), ApiFix (for correction of scoliosis) and many more," said Yulia Rachinsky-Spivakov, deputy head of mission of the Israeli Embassy in the Philippines.

Israel also has treatment for patients with Parkinson's disease.

Based in Haifa, the world-renowned Rambam Medical Center has a noninvasive and nonionizing brain treatment that stops tremors in Parkinson's disease-afflicted patients.

Insightec, in collaboration with Rambam neurosurgeons, offers brain treatment that utilizes "MRI-guided focused ultrasound" to stop "essential tremor" without surgery.

A 1,011-bed hospital and Is-

rael's largest medical campus, Rambam serves more than two million people annually. It treats patients from the Israel Defense Forces, United States Navy 6th Fleet and the United Nations peacekeeping forces posted in the region.

"Body and mind can't be separable as we treat patients," said professor Rafi Beyer, Rambam director, explaining the holistic approach of the 80-year-old hospital in treating patients.

Rambam has its own innovation hub that includes MindUP, Haifa's digital health incubator. With an investment of \$40 million, its goal is to establish 40 innovative companies involved in big data, predictive analytics, cloud computing, wearable and implantable sensors and hospital information technology systems.

#### Artificial vision

Meanwhile, an Israeli company has developed a device called "OrCam MyEye 2.0." Worn like eyeglasses and equipped with a lightweight smart camera, it provides blind and nearly blind people an artificial vision that instantly reads printed or digital text aloud and recognizes human faces, products and money notes in real time.

Haifa considers itself as the "startup" capital of Israel since this small but multireligious town is home to Technion Institute of Technology, Rambam Hospital and the University of Haifa.

"If Israel is a startup nation, Haifa is a startup city ... and life sciences capital of Israel," said Or Shahaf, CEO of Haifa Economic Cooperation Ltd.

Technion and Rambam

serve as the main pillars of the industrial and scientific industries of Israel, with Technion producing three Nobel laureates in less than a decade.

Dr. Galit Rand, head of Haifa's strategic planning office, said that 40 percent of Haifa's residents have academic degrees, which "explains the residents' creativity, innovation and influence" in different fields.

Technion itself is an "economic growth engine" because of its decision to merge "industrial and scientific" fields, said Gil Kainer, head of Technion's communications and external relations office.

#### Growth engine

Ran Natanzon, head of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Innovation and Brand Management, said that "innovation is the growth engine of economies today. Innovation is a door-opener. It creates bridges between people."

The culture of chutzpah (audacity) is behind this passion for innovation among Israelis, Natanzon pointed out: "Chutzpah is speaking out what we think at a given moment, bluntly, freely."

He summed up the rationale behind the staging of Start Haifa. "Exchange of ideas is a good way of connecting people. Diversity creates new things and leads to a thriving ecosystem," he said.

The startup Antipara Exploration Inc., an underwater mapping and geospatial analytics company, was chosen to represent the Philippines at Start Haifa.

"Our services help our customers map, measure and monitor their underwater assets, be it from industrial applications to environmental monitoring," said Aaron Hilomen, Antipara president. —CONTRIBUTED INQ

### DISCOUNT SHOPPING



Silang Mayor Corie Poblete (fifth from left) leads the opening of the Via Rodeo luxury store at Acienda Designer Outlet with (from left) Joan Santos, Via Rodeo's Aira Paguio, Cathay Land's Ronald Uy, Fr. Arnel Valderama and Acienda's Arman Ilano.

## DESIGNER OUTLET OFFERS YEAR-ROUND SALE

High-end international designer brands with discounts from 30-50 percent are now available at Acienda Designer Outlet's (ADO) latest store.

The newly opened Via Rodeo houses fashion brands such as Valentino, Salvatore Ferragamo, Prada, Fendi, Bulgari, Tory Burch and Gucci at attractive prices, along with other favorites such as

Longchamp, Coach, Michael Kors, Kate Spade and Moschino.

Celebrity mom Isabelle Daza recently took a day out to shop at ADO. "I'm super excited for Via Rodeo. I love the brands because they're high-end but there are also midlevel international names and plenty of choices."

The place is clean and spacious with different sites perfect for photo opportunities. ADO has a giant windmill, London-style telephone booths, a replica of the Eiffel Tower and landscaped walkways.

Via Rodeo is now open and stocked with high-end bag and accessory brands at more accessible prices, starting at 30 percent off all year round. Other familiar fashion staples such as Adidas, Macbeth and Timberland all offer a guaranteed minimum of 30-percent discount, and can go as high as 70 percent off for even bigger savings.

Acienda Designer Outlet is at Km 48, Aguinaldo Highway, Silang, Cavite. [www.aciendadesigneroutlet.com](http://www.aciendadesigneroutlet.com).



Acienda Designer Outlet ambassador Isabelle Daza tries on a discounted purse at the new Via Rodeo luxury store.

### WHAT'S UP

## DOCTOR-PAINTERS TO HOLD GROUP SHOW

The F.B. Sena Buenas Artes Art Facility will present a group painting exhibit by doctor-painters billed "Pulso't Pinta" Aug. 7-25.

Participating doctors are Evangeline Santos, Orestes Monzon, Alvin de Jesus, Isagani Cruz, Danny Madrazo, Baby-grace Palma, Jose Armin Virata,

Ruzanne Caro, Juliet Briones, Charie Del Rosario, Shirley Pascual, Betsi Sanders, Angeline Atienza, Gina Munoz, Monina Macam, Airen Sigue and Ma-

Concepcion Llado.

The gallery is at Windsor Villas, 348 Tandang Sora Ave. corner Congressional Avenue Extension, Quezon City.

**Special Projects Head:**  
Theresa S. Samaniego  
[tek.samaniego@gmail.com](mailto:tek.samaniego@gmail.com)  
**Advertising sales team:**  
Cherry del Rosario  
[cdelrosario@inquirer.com.ph](mailto:cdelrosario@inquirer.com.ph)  
Novie Joy Barayuga  
[nbarayuga@inquirer.com.ph](mailto:nbarayuga@inquirer.com.ph)