

Medical science exporters

Cochlear device



Australian medical research and commercialised inventions are driving growth in this specialised area of high technology.

Cochlear is the world leader in cochlear implants. Its “bionic ear” has enabled tens of thousands of hearing impaired people to hear. The company began in 1982 and builds upon the work of Professor Graeme Clark of the University of Melbourne, the implants inventor. Cochlear is now listed on the Australian Stock Exchange and sells to more than 70 countries. The company has over 50,000 customers and it continues a research program with the Bionic Ear Institute of the University of Melbourne. www.cochlear.com/English/index.asp

Medical and surgical equipment manufacturing

	1996-1997	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	
Employment	4,518	4,727	4,714	5,111	5,293	5,410	People
Exports	354.3	435.4	469.6	455.4	595.8	705.9	\$m
Imports	982.9	1,202.2	1,417.9	1,425.8	1,557.0	1,791.7	\$m
Total Wages	129.8	137.4	141.8	154.5	156.1	158.7	\$m

Source: IBISWORLD, 2003

Ozgene produces genetically modified (GM) mice for scientists investigating genetic diseases and new drugs. These mice allow researchers to copy human conditions of genetic disorders on a molecular level. Ozgene exports 80 per cent of its services to North America, Europe, Japan, Singapore and New Zealand.

Dr Frank Koentgen founded Ozgene in Perth in 1999, but through sharing and R&D partnerships, Ozgene’s international reputation has grown. The company grew by 80 per cent in 2002-2003.

www.ozgene.com

ITL Corporation designs and manufactures equipment used in hospitals. Many of their products are designed to improve the safety of doctors and nurses, for example, by preventing accidental infections with dirty needles.

The company began in Canberra in 1994 but now has 150 employees and offices in Europe, North America and Asia. New products are researched and designed (R&D) in Canberra and then manufactured in Malaysia. ITL holds 100 patents worldwide and exports to 30 countries. www.itlcorporation.com

Student activities

- Explain how a cochlear implant works.
- Explain how R&D can lead to scientific discoveries.
- What are patents and why are these important?
- Why have both medical exports and imports increased over the last six years?
- In groups discuss ways Australia can expand its medical science export industry.
- Draw a line graph showing the percentage growth in medical and surgical equipment exports from 1996 to 2002.
- Prepare a publicity brochure for one of these exports explaining its benefits to users.
- Research other Australian medical science inventions that have had global impact.

