



# Backing for heart valve start-up

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The Bidvest Group and government's Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) are investing a combined R30m in a University of Cape Town (UCT) start-up company that is pioneering a way of replacing heart valves that doesn't require open heart surgery.



Image: [FreeDigitalPhotos.net](#)

Southern Access Technologies Holdings (SATH) was founded by Prof Peter Zilla, the head of cardiothoracic surgery at Groote Schuur Hospital, and Prof David Williams, a world authority in medical engineering based in the US.

They have, with the assistance of polymer technologist Deon Bezuidenhoudt, designed a polyurethane heart valve that is expected to sell for under US\$1000 in developing countries, compared with current heart valve prostheses which cost \$5000-\$30000.

They have also invented a deployment device for the valve that does away with the need for open heart surgery, making the procedure more accessible in poor countries.

With the additional funding (this is the second amount of R12m invested by the TIA), SATH will develop its prototypes with a view to testing them in late 2013.

The new technology will add to the Western Cape's growing reputation as a biotech hub. "It also shows that SA can compete in the global arena when it comes to the manufacturing of medical devices," says the TIA's Sibongile Gumbi.

Source: *Financial Mail*

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