



Interview with Viktor Růžička, CEO of BioVendor – Laboratorni medicina a.s.

Offering hope through research and diagnosis

Knowing the enemy is vital in the battle against disease. Diagnosis is therefore the first step towards a cure in the medical field. Thankfully, doctors today have recourse to a wide range of diagnostic tests that can give a definitive answer and hope of relief to patients plagued by uncomfortable or debilitating symptoms. One of the most innovative companies in this area is Czech biotechnology specialist BioVendor – Laboratorni medicina a.s. Founded in 1995, it specializes in the development and manufacture of in vitro diagnostic and for-research-use immunoassays, antibodies and recombinant proteins.



Diagnostic equipment is the first step towards identifying and treating diseases

BioVendor started out 20 years ago as a small research and development laboratory but has since grown into a leading biotechnology company with international activities. The company was founded by its CEO, Viktor Růžička, upon his return to Poland after having spent some years in the United States. “I started the company in 1992, and we started trading properly in 1993,” recalls Mr. Růžička. “To begin with we imported all kinds of laboratory products, including diagnostic kits, for sale in the Czech market. We are now the sole agent for Siemens in the Czech Republic. In 1995, we set up our own research and development division and began to manufacture our own products.”

This proved a major turning point and the start of a period of steady growth that continues to this day. “Our research activities focus on rapidly growing areas of study

within the international research and diagnostic community,” says Mr. Růžička. “These include some of the biggest challenges facing the medical profession including obesity, metabolic syndromes and diabetes, cardiovascular physiology, renal disease and injury, bone metabolism and osteoporosis, infection and inflammation, oncology

and tumour markers. Our diagnostic products provide an invaluable tool in determining the best possible treatment.”

Lead times for new products in the biotech sector are long. BioVendor’s products are the result of long-term research and development activities. The company’s

research professionals are tasked with identifying promising areas for research, setting new targets and working to develop unique new products. In this way, BioVendor has pioneered many commercial assays, recombinant proteins and antibodies and in many cases was the first to bring them to market. The product line includes immu-



Deliveries to customers are coordinated from an 8,000 m² logistics center in Brno

noassays used to detect newly identified protein markers in samples of both human and animal origin. When developing immunoassays, the company focuses on producing kits that are easy to use, are highly sensitive and return reliable results every

time. By using modern recombinant protein technologies, BioVendor has been able to overcome many production limitations to prepare a wide range of proteins. In the field of antibodies, BioVendor produces a wide range of monoclonal and polyclonal antibodies for the international research community. "These are fields that will continue to grow," says Mr. Růžička. "As medical science identifies new proteins and molecules, we will continue to develop assays to test for them."

In addition to distributing its own products, BioVendor also distributes products from other leading manufacturers. The company is the sole agent for Siemens in the Czech Republic and also distributes Endotoxin removal and detection products manufactured by Hyglos GmbH. On the customer side, BioVendor targets diagnostic and research laboratories in hospitals and universities, state or university-owned research institutes and the pharmaceutical industry. "Our customers include many of the world's top-ranking scientific institutions," says Mr.



Fully automated assay equipment provides test results at the touch of a button

Růžička. "They use our products in the course of their own research into new cures for today's big killers such as cancer and heart disease." BioVendor exports around 30% of its annual turnover of 33.3 million EUR to customers in the US, Japan and Germany as its key export markets. In order to serve them better, it has opened subsidiaries in Germany, the UK and the US.

BioVendor employs 360 people at eleven locations. It has an 8,000 m² distribution and logistics center at its head office in Brno. Finding qualified employees in this science-oriented field is one of the major challenges it faces in the future. "Our location in Brno does make things slightly easier as we are close to the university and there is a large pool of well-qualified people. However, skilled people are few and far between, so we have to grab them when we can and make sure we hold

BioVendor – Laboratorní medicína a.s.

Karásek 1767/1

62100 Brno

Czech Republic

+420 549 124185

+420 549 211460

info@biovendor.com

www.biovendor.com

BioVendor



on to them," says Mr. Růžička. The opportunity to work in such a forward-looking company, carrying out groundbreaking work with huge significance for the future health of current generations is certainly a major factor in BioVendor's favour. The company is also looking to move into new areas in the future. "About 18

months ago, we founded a new company, BioVendor Instruments, to manufacture diagnostic instruments," outlines Mr. Růžička. "It is part of our long-term strategy of becoming a single source supplier. A lot will depend on the level of industry and government spending in this area, but we are optimistic that this is where our future lies." ■



BioVendor's headquarters in Brno