



Zapping the germs

Written by [Mark Sanchez](#)



UV Partners developed UVAngel to disinfect surfaces in health care settings. The company recently secured a \$3 million investment from JSJ Corp., whose GHSP division will work with the startup on engineering and producing the device.

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Tech startup's device to automate disinfection process gets \$3M boost

UV Partners Inc. developed a device that targets one of the most stubborn problems in health care: infections acquired in the hospital that sicken or kill thousands of patients annually. When Nelson Jacobson and executives at **JSJ Corp.** met last year with their counterparts at UV Partners, he quickly saw the device's market potential.

Their meeting ultimately led to Grand Havenbased JSJ investing \$3 million in UV Partners. The two companies also signed a strategic partnership for JSJ's **GHSP Inc.** subsidiary — a Grand Havenbased producer of electronic controls for cars and highend household appliances — to provide UV Partners with engineering and design support and to manufacture the UVAngel device.

“When we met with them, what we saw were people who were extremely innovative, very knowledgeable about markets, and they have a bundle of technologies that are extremely important to society — and that's the ability to continually disinfect devices,” said Jacobson, the chairman, president and CEO of JSJ.

“This is something that felt good to us right at the beginning,” he said. “It was one of the most natural, organic deals I've ever been part of.”

UV Partners also plans to relocate its operations from Livonia to West Michigan.

The company's UVAngel device automates the process of disinfecting equipment and surfaces in medical settings by using safe, low doses of ultraviolet light. The device mounts above surfaces such as computer keyboards and touchscreens on medical equipment like intravenous pumps.

The UVAngel device allows work within its setting — such as a hospital room or physician office — to go on uninterrupted. Once motion sensors detect a piece of equipment is no longer in use, the device runs a disinfection cycle.

That's a unique advantage UVAngel has over many of the larger devices in the market today that use UV light to disinfect areas and require closing off a room while cleaning.

“We are operating within the environment and allowing workflow to happen, and then cleaning while workflow is occurring,” said UV Partners CEO Tom Byrne. “We really are there to assist this infection-prevention challenge that they have, and it'll be placed on these devices with kind of the ‘set it and forget it’ mentality.

“We're continually zapping the germs.”

Those germs have been an ongoing problem for health care in particular, leading to thousands of deaths annually and adding billions of dollars to health care spending.

The Leapfrog Group, an organization that promotes patient safety, reported in June that the number of U.S. hospitals achieving zero infection rates for five kinds of hospital-acquired infections “declined dramatically” from 2015, “indicating many patients are still at risk.”

The organization’s report cites research showing that daily, one in 25 hospital patients contracts an infection, prolonging hospital stays or leading to deaths.

UV Partners founder Ted Cole began developing the UVAngel after a doctor visit years ago during which he watched the physician go back and forth between him and typing information into a medical record with a laptop computer. Each time he switched gears presented an opportunity to spread or pick up germs.

According to Byrne, Cole asked the doctor how often the computer keyboard gets cleaned. The doctor responded he was unsure. The moment led Cole to begin thinking about how to automate the cleaning process.

Byrne pitches UVAngel not as a sole solution to hospital-acquired infections but as a “major piece of the puzzle” that can complement other steps now used to clean and disinfect hospital equipment and spaces.

“We think we can have a big impact in that space,” he said.

UV Partners initially targets the device for health care uses and eventually will pursue the food service and retail industries. The company recently signed a deal with Chicago-based CDW Corp., a technology supplier to hospitals, and has ongoing talks with medical equipment manufacturers interested in embedding UVAngel into their products.

“We do have quite a bit of interest from OEMs within the space to take our product and make their products better,” Byrne said.

Jacobson sees the device also getting used on public kiosks such as airport check-ins that get a lot of use.

“We can make sure those surfaces are more consistently clean,” he said. “We can do a lot with this technology.”

In JSJ, UV Partners aligned with a company that can not only mass produce the UVAngel but also support the development of other products. UV Partners has seven other new products “on the roadmap right now” that it can develop with JSJ.

The potential to work together on other new products contributed to JSJ’s interest in investing in UV Partners, Jacobson said.

“They’re all really innovative and they’re things that help the world, help society (and) make things safer for everybody,” he said. “It’s a great partnership.”

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