

ESR plans investment in biotech start-up

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As part of the drive to remain at the forefront of technology, ESR has invested in AuramerBio Limited (ABL), a biotech start-up company out of Victoria University of Wellington that designs and develops aptamer biosensors.

An aptamer is a sequence of single-strand synthetic DNA that can bind to specific target molecules. They can be used to identify and quantify small molecules such as abused substances.

Rapid and sensitive detection of small molecules is becoming increasingly important and the global aptamer market is expected to grow considerably over the coming years.

Aptamers show great promise in replacing expensive, elaborate detection platforms, making them highly suitable, in combination with light weight technology, to provide rapid testing solutions across a broad range of markets.

ESR first became interested in aptamer technology when collaborating with Victoria University on methods for methamphetamine detection in saliva for potential use as a road-side test. ABL's intellectual property originated at Victoria University, and Viclink (Victoria's commercialisation arm), is the major shareholder in ABL.

While initially the science will be explored for application in the drugs of abuse space, other potential applications of aptamer technology are being investigated such as pathogenic bacteria detection, particularly related to food and water.