INVEST360

PITCH COMPETITION & SUMMIT

PITCHING COMPANIES | SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

LIFE SCIENCES

a2TECH360

Thank you for joining us for Invest360. We're excited to once again showcase some of the most promising startups and entrepreneurs from across Southeast Michigan.

Entrepreneurship and innovation are critical to the continued growth and prosperity of our region. Michigan has built an increasingly vibrant startup ecosystem, supported by world-class research universities, a deep base of technical and industry talent, experienced entrepreneurs, and a growing community of investors and partners committed to helping early-stage companies succeed.

Over the years, many promising Michigan startups have participated in events like Invest360, using the experience to build relationships with investors, refine their stories, and ultimately raise the capital needed to grow. Invest360 was created to provide outstanding entrepreneurs with that opportunity — a platform to showcase their companies and connect with the people and resources that can help them take the next step.

Information technology, life sciences, and mobility remain particular strengths for our region. Southeast Michigan is home to hundreds of innovative companies across these sectors, ranging from emerging startups to industry leaders. Together, they are developing new technologies, creating high-quality jobs, attracting investment, and helping position Michigan for continued leadership in the industries of the future.

Invest360 highlights companies within these sectors that we believe are worth watching — ambitious entrepreneurs developing innovative technologies and working to build the next generation of successful Michigan companies.

Special thanks to our Invest360 sponsors — Bank of Ann Arbor, Barnes & Thornburg, Bodman, ID Ventures, UM Innovation Partnerships, MEDC, MRPR, and Washtenaw Community College. We greatly appreciate your support of Invest360 and your commitment to strengthening Michigan's early-stage innovation ecosystem.

We hope you enjoy the program, meet some exceptional entrepreneurs, and come away even more excited about the innovation happening in our region.

Welcome to Invest360,

Mike Flanagan
Vice President, Capital Programs
Ann Arbor SPARK

Invest360 Life Sciences Session Agenda

Welcome

Judge Introductions

- Diane Bouis, Ben Franklin Ventures
- Dan Kidle, Arboretum Ventures
- Maritza Saavedra, Corewell Health Ventures

Company Presentations

- Crank Bio
- Entirety Biomedical
- Keryx
- Sequestro, Inc.
- Zera Medical LLC

Life Sciences Judges

Diane Bouis, Ben Franklin Technology Partners

Diane Bouis, PhD, MBA a serves as an Entrepreneur in Residence with Ben Franklin Technology Partners, CEO of Microvascular Health Solutions, Fundraising Board Member of BioMEMS Diagnostics, Tech Team Member with the SBDC and Founder of BullsView Ventures.

She is an alternate member of an oncology institutional review board (IRB) at University of Michigan, and a mentor in several biomedical/ medtech accelerator programs.

Dr Bouis obtained her PhD at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands and transitioned into business with an MBA from University of Michigan. She and has extensive experience managing startup portfolios through prior roles as Innovation Manager at the University of Michigan's Innovation Partnerships Startup Incubator and as an innovation consultant with The Inovo Group and and as US Director for MedTech Innovator, the largest medtech accelerator in the world.

She is a frequent speaker on medtech/ biotech/ health-tech innovation, investment and go to market strategy, incubators and accelerators, mentorship, leadership and growing strong teams.

Besides her global roles, this native of France is a staunch supporter of her chosen Midwest startup home ecosystem and advisor to and investor in Michigan biomedical startups. She is in the early phase of building a medtech founder residency fund.

Dan Kidle, Arboretum Ventures

Dan identifies promising investment opportunities across Arboretum's sectors of interest, with particular emphasis on life science tools. He also works closely with portfolio companies to support strategic decision-making, fundraising efforts, and financial analysis. Dan currently serves as a board director for BrightSpec, Enumera Molecular, Flosonics Medical, PAK BioSolutions and Strata Oncology.

Dan has played key roles in successful Arboretum investments, including serving on the board of IntelliCyt (acquired in 2016) and leading Arboretum's investment, and serving as board chair for both Swift Biosciences (acquired in 2021) and Dropworks (acquired in 2021). Additionally, Dan has supported investments including NeuMoDx, Strata Oncology, and SI-BONE. Dan was a recipient of the National Venture Capital Association's Rising Star Award in 2020.

Prior to joining Arboretum, Dan held corporate finance roles at Eli Lilly & Company, supporting the company's U.S. sales and marketing operations. Dan currently serves on the Investment Advisory Board for the Michigan Biomedical Venture Fund at the University of Michigan.

Dan earned a BBA and MBA from the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan.

Maritza Saavedra, Corewell Health Ventures

Maritza Saavedra is an Advisor with Corewell Health Ventures, where she helps evaluate investments and strategic partnerships across healthcare. With experience spanning venture capital, healthcare innovation, payer strategy, and health system operations, she brings a unique perspective on the commercial, clinical, and operational factors that drive successful healthcare ventures. Prior to joining Corewell Health Ventures, Maritza worked at Priority Health, the integrated health plan of the Corewell Health system, gaining deep insight into the payer landscape, healthcare operations, and industry transformation. She holds degrees from Ferris State University and Michigan State University and is passionate about supporting entrepreneurs who are advancing the future of healthcare through innovation.

Contact Name: Kostas Charizanis, PhD, MBA

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Industry/Sector: Biotechnology

Capital Raised to Date: $600k

Capital Being Raised: $5M

Revenue (last 12 months): $513,000

Revenue Projection (through 2026): $513,000

Company Description: Crank Bio is an Ann Arbor, MI based biotechnology company, pioneering a new class of antisense-based therapies called small nuclear guide RNAs (SNuG-RNAs) designed to overcome the current limitations of antisense oligonucleotide (ASO) therapies to treat a wide range of serious human genetic diseases. ASO-based therapeutics have been promising technologies, but their impact in the clinic has been underwhelming. By leveraging natural RNA-processing pathways, the SNuG-RNA platform is designed to overcome key limitations hampering translation of ASO therapies. SNuG-RNA has a favorable safety profile, does not express immunogenic proteins, is stable, does not require reinjection, and has good biodistribution. Together these properties enable unprecedented exon skipping efficacy in both animal models and in the clinic.

Our lead indication, Usher syndrome, is an ideal application for the SNuG-RNA platform. Patients with Usher type II suffer from retinitis pigmentosa, leading to vision loss with early-onset hearing loss. By deleting a pathogenic fragment that is present in 300,000 patients with Usher's syndrome, targeted cells can be reprogrammed to produce a newly coded functional protein. Our lead asset, CRK-001, showed higher efficacy in an in vitro head-to-head comparison against QR-421a, which has been tested in a clinical trial (NCT05176717) by ProQR, and reached to almost 100% editing in vivo in a 28-day, 3-arm, dose-escalation study, designed to assess the efficacy and safety of CRK-001 against a non-targeting control.

Supported by a strong scientific rationale, demonstrated efficacy, and a substantial patient population, there is a clear path toward developing a therapy capable of treating both the auditory and visual manifestations of the disease.

Competitive Advantage: We are developing a platform that has demonstrated clinical efficacy, achieving results unmatched by any current antisense technology, at doses with a favorable safety profile. This combination of efficacy and safety represents a fundamental leap forward rather than an incremental improvement.

Antisense oligonucleotide (ASO) therapeutics are a promising genetic medicine modality composed of small, chemically modified nucleic acid sequences designed to bind and restore the function of disease-causing genes, by promoting the degradation of toxic mutant transcripts or modulating splicing patterns. However, despite representing the current standard or state of the art, traditional ASOs and ASO-antibody conjugates, still fall short in achieving the efficiency required to deliver statistically significant improvements and clinically meaningful outcomes. These limitations stem from non-specific binding to plasma and cell-surface proteins, poor biodistribution, and limited cell-specific uptake, which collectively result in reduced therapeutic activity and increased toxicity. Moreover, due to their short half-life, most ASOs require frequent intrathecal, intravenous, or intravitreal injections, placing a considerable burden on patients.

Our SNuG-RNA technology is based on engineered non-coding small nuclear guide RNAs that, like ASOs, contain an antisense sequence complementary to the target transcript. These SNuGs are delivered using adeno-associated viruses (AAVs) and are expressed in one or more cassettes, combining the benefits of single-dose administration with improved biodistribution and long-term expression. Additionally, by leveraging the intrinsic nuclear localization of small nuclear guide RNAs, the platform enables sustained expression and trafficking of the antisense domain directly within the nucleus, where it exerts its therapeutic activity. This has led to remarkable efficacy in USH2A editing *in vivo* (Usher Syndrome), in preclinical models of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), and promising results in a DMD Phase I clinical trial.

With a platform that surpasses existing technologies and a team deeply familiar with both the science and the path to commercialization, we are uniquely positioned to redefine the future of genetic medicine.

Presenter's Short Bio: Dr. Kostas Charizanis is a biotech entrepreneur and scientific leader with over a decade of experience in drug development, translational research, and company building. He currently serves as President and CEO of Crank Bio, a gene therapy company advancing a novel class of RNA-targeted therapeutics for genetic diseases.

Dr. Charizanis has held executive and scientific leadership roles at both public and venture-backed biopharma companies. As a founding member of Ocuphire Pharma (NASDAQ: OCUP), he played a key role in guiding the company through its IPO and the FDA approval of Ryzumvi™ in 2023. Prior to founding Crank Bio, he co-founded Tacit Therapeutics, where he served as Chief Operating Officer and a member of the board of directors. Throughout his career, he has raised over $40 million in non-dilutive and venture funding.

Dr. Charizanis earned a PhD in molecular genetics from the University of Florida and an MBA from the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. He is the inventor on multiple patents and has authored numerous peer-reviewed publications in ophthalmology, RNA biology, and neuromuscular diseases.

Contact Name: Jake Edick

Title: CEO/Co-Founder

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Industry/Sector: Healthcare/Medical Device

Capital Raised to Date: $3M

Capital Being Raised: $4M

Revenue (last 12 months): $0

Revenue Projection (through 2026): $0

Company Description:

Entirety is redefining the Standard of Care in orthopedic fixation to give trauma, cosmetic, and reconstructive surgery patients less invasive implants that restores natural function at a lower cost of care.

The industry is already moving this way. Orthopedics is heading toward a metal-free future, and major strategics are actively acquiring companies to get there.

Entirety's Curasorb is positioned to disrupt hard and soft tissue fixation markets in orthopedics. It's a patented, all-natural absorbable magnesium alloy that combines the strength of titanium with optimized bio-absorption. Implants made from Curasorb reliably heal fractures, then safely absorb into the body, restoring tissue to its natural state.

The result for patients and surgeons: easier surgical handling, better outcomes, lower treatment cost, faster recovery, and none of the long-term complications that come with permanent metal hardware. Entirety is

raising $4 million to achieve US 510(k) clearance for its Curasorb Headless Compression Screw system in 2028.

Competitive Advantage:

Curasorb offers similar surgical technique and strength as titanium, giving surgeons confidence the bone will heal, without the extra steps absorbable polymers require. Curasorb is the first absorbable metal platform engineered to perform in three stages: it absorbs slowly at first to allow strong bone fusion, then absorbs uniformly for predictable performance, before restoring the bone to its natural physiology.

Curasorb is also flexible, with the ability to be adjusted for the unique size and shape requirements of different applications. Complimenting the unique ability to adjust absorption is the only US-based alloy supply.

Presenter's Short Bio:

Jake Edick has a BS in Materials Science and Engineering from Michigan Technological University and an MBA from the University of Minnesota, where he concentrated in Entrepreneurship and Medical Industry Leadership. Jake started his career at Boston Scientific, becoming a well-known expert in medical device metallurgy, design, and manufacturing, the company Subject Matter Expert for bioabsorbable metals and the Project Manager for their Absorbable Metal Coronary Stent project. During this time, Jake developed as an industry recognized leader in bioabsorbable metals, including 9 patents and various scientific presentations and publications. Jake co-founded Entirety Biomedical with the goal of delivering the orthopedics industry cutting edge bioabsorbable metal implant technology capable of fulfilling all the needs communicated by surgeons.

Contact Name: Daniel Wilinski **Title: CEO**

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Phone: 608-620-8746

Industry/Sector: Biotech/Pharma

Capital Raised to Date: $200K

Capital Being Raised: $ 2.5M

Revenue (last 12 months): $ 0

Revenue Projection (through 2026): $ 0

Company Description:

Central to how long and healthy we live is metabolism. At Keryx we are focused on preventing diabetes because it is a massively prevalent metabolic disease that makes us sick. Current diabetes treatments only manage the disease. With our breakthrough nucleic acid therapeutic we restore insulin cell function to address the root cause rather than just managing symptoms. We're starting with the 850K+ patients annually for whom GLP-1s don't work, a $15B market, establishing proof of concept before eventually expanding to the diabetes prevention market. Long-term, this approach will expand to other chronic diseases disease where early intervention can further extend health span. Our first round will fund 18 months of technical and pre-clinical validation to demonstrate proof of concept for our therapeutic.

The company is led by Daniel Wilinski PhD, who has 15+ years of RNA biology research experience. After discovering that dysregulated insulin mRNA causes diabetes, he founded Keryx and bring this breakthrough directly to patients who need it. He is complemented by co-founder Kathrin Knauf who has 25+ years of operations experience at leading pharma companies including Novartis and Moderna.

Competitive Advantage:

New science lets us restore insulin-producing cell function to reverse or prevent type 2 diabetes—transforming it from a chronic disease into a preventable condition.

Presenter's Short Bio:

Daniel is the co-founder of Keryx, working at the intersection of longevity science and diabetes prevention. He researched RNA biology at leading universities for over 15 years and holds a PhD in molecular biology. During his postdoctoral fellowship, he discovered new mechanisms controlling how cells produce insulin, work recognized by the NIH with the prestigious K99/R00 award worth $1M. He left his successful academic career to launch Keryx in 2025 driven by a problem he has watched play out in his own family.

INVEST360 INVESTOR SHOWCASE

SEQUESTRO

Contact Name: Dr. Juergen Koller **Title:** CEO | Founder

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Industry/Sector: Clean Tech / Advanced Materials

Capital Raised to Date: $692,584 (Pre-seed)

Capital Being Raised: Pre-seed oversubscribed; evaluating strategic investment opportunities.

Revenue (last 12 months): $0 (Pre-Revenue)

Revenue Projection (through 2026): $8,000 (Initial customer evaluations and early pilot sales)

Company Description:

Sequestro, Inc. is an advanced materials company developing next-generation adsorbents for the removal of PFAS ("forever chemicals") from contaminated water. Our flagship product, ArborSORB™, is a proprietary, wood-based granular media engineered to deliver ion exchange resin performance at a fraction of the cost while utilizing a renewable, domestically sourced feedstock. By combining high adsorption capacity, rapid treatment kinetics, and scalable manufacturing, ArborSORB™ enables more affordable and sustainable PFAS remediation across municipal, industrial, landfill leachate, and defense applications.

Founded in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Sequestro is translating university-developed technology into commercial water treatment solutions through strategic partnerships with engineering firms, OEMs, utilities, and environmental remediation companies. Since launching in 2024, the company has successfully raised an oversubscribed pre-seed financing round, established pilot-scale manufacturing capabilities, shipped its first commercial evaluation samples, and secured multiple industry partnerships supporting field validation and commercialization.

Sequestro's mission is to make clean drinking water more accessible by replacing legacy adsorbent technologies with higher-performing, lower-cost, and more sustainable alternatives. As PFAS regulations continue to tighten worldwide, the company is positioned to become a leading supplier of advanced adsorption media for one of the fastest-growing segments of the global water treatment industry.

Competitive Advantage:

Sequestro's competitive advantage lies in combining the performance of premium PFAS treatment media with the economics and sustainability required for widespread adoption. ArborSORB™ is designed to deliver ion exchange resin-level performance while targeting a substantially lower cost, allowing customers to improve treatment efficiency without significantly increasing operating expenses. Unlike conventional activated carbon, ArborSORB™ demonstrates rapid adsorption kinetics and strong removal of both long- and short-chain PFAS, enabling effective treatment in compact systems with shorter empty bed contact times.

Beyond product performance, Sequestro's platform is built around scalable manufacturing using abundant, renewable wood-based feedstocks and established chemical processing methods, reducing supply chain risk and supporting domestic production. The company exclusively licenses its core technology from the University of Michigan while continuing to expand its intellectual property portfolio around manufacturing, product optimization, and new applications. Early engagement with engineering firms, equipment manufacturers, utilities, and remediation partners ensures that product development remains closely aligned with customer needs and accelerates commercial adoption. Together, these technical, operational, and commercial advantages position Sequestro to disrupt a rapidly growing multibillion-dollar global market for water treatment media.

Presenter’s Short Bio:

Dr. Juergen Koller is the Founder and CEO of Sequestro, Inc. and a chemist, entrepreneur, and technology commercialization leader with more than 15 years of experience spanning advanced materials, specialty chemicals, manufacturing scale-up, and commercialization. He completed his undergraduate education in Germany before pursuing graduate studies at the University of Florida, where he earned a Ph.D. in Inorganic Chemistry. His doctoral research focused on organometallic chemistry, materials chemistry, and the chemical vapor deposition of advanced thin films. He subsequently completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of California, Berkeley, conducting research in main-group metal catalysis and synthetic inorganic chemistry.

Prior to founding Sequestro, Dr. Koller held technical and leadership roles across the chemical manufacturing industry, including Wacker Chemical Corporation, Momentive Performance Materials, and k-Space Associates, as well as serving at the U.S. Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) as a civilian. Throughout his career, he has specialized in scaling laboratory innovations into commercially viable products and manufacturing processes. As a first-generation college graduate and entrepreneur, he is passionate about utilizing his vast experience to create advanced materials solutions that strengthen domestic manufacturing, protect the environment, and improve access to clean water.

Zera Medical

ZeraFlow

Contact Name: Paul Boehms **Title:** CEO

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Industry/Sector: Medical Device Manufacturer

Capital Raised to Date: ~$650,000

Capital Being Raised: $1.2 million

Revenue (last 12 months): $0

Revenue Projection (through 2026): $90,000

Company Description:

Zera Medical is a Michigan-based medical device company developing ZeraFlow, a novel bowel preparation system designed to transform one of the most significant barriers to colorectal cancer screening. While colonoscopy remains the gold standard for detecting and preventing colorectal cancer, the unpleasant, multi-day bowel preparation required beforehand causes many patients to delay or avoid screening altogether. ZeraFlow replaces the traditional at-home preparation with a clinically supervised, approximately 30-minute bowel preparation performed immediately before the procedure. By moving bowel preparation into a controlled clinical environment, ZeraFlow has the potential to improve preparation quality, increase patient compliance, enhance clinical workflow, and expand access to life-saving colorectal cancer screening.

The underlying technology has already been successfully utilized in hundreds of patient procedures overseas. Zera Medical owns the intellectual property behind the technology, has submitted its FDA 510(k) application, and is preparing for initial U.S. pilot deployments following regulatory clearance. Headquartered in Michigan, the company is committed to growing its executive leadership, engineering, and manufacturing capabilities within the state while commercializing an innovative medical technology with the potential to improve patient outcomes and transform how colonoscopy preparation is delivered.

Competitive Advantage:

Zera Medical's competitive advantage is built on a fundamentally different approach to colonoscopy preparation that addresses one of the greatest barriers to colorectal cancer screening. Rather than relying on patients to complete a multi-day bowel preparation at home, ZeraFlow performs a clinically supervised bowel preparation immediately before colonoscopy. The system is designed to provide a complete

cleansing of the entire colon, reaching the cecum, with the goal of delivering a more consistent preparation than traditional patient-managed methods while significantly improving the patient experience.

The underlying technology has already been successfully utilized in hundreds of patient procedures internationally, providing valuable real-world clinical experience as the company prepares for U.S. commercialization. This clinical foundation, combined with the submission of the company's FDA 510(k) application, positions Zera Medical to introduce a fundamentally new model of bowel preparation to the U.S. market.

Zera Medical owns the intellectual property underlying ZeraFlow and continues to strengthen its competitive position through multiple provisional patent applications covering both the device and the associated clinical procedures. The company is supported by an experienced leadership team with deep expertise in medical device engineering, executive leadership, FDA regulatory strategy, commercialization, healthcare operations, clinical deployment, and reimbursement strategy. In addition, Zera Medical has assembled a distinguished Medical Advisory Board comprised of respected local and nationally recognized gastroenterologists who provide clinical guidance, support product development, and help position the company for successful adoption within the GI community.

Presenter's Short Bio:

Paul Boehms is the Chief Executive Officer of Zera Medical, where he leads the company's strategy, regulatory execution, and commercialization efforts. He brings more than 25 years of executive leadership experience building and transforming organizations through operational excellence, financial leadership, and strategic growth.

Prior to joining Zera Medical, Paul served as Chief Operating Officer of Warner Norcross + Judd and previously held executive leadership positions at Clark Hill and Deloitte. Throughout his career, he has led complex strategic initiatives, organizational transformations, mergers and acquisitions, and operational improvements across a wide range of industries.

Paul earned his MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania with concentrations in Finance and Entrepreneurial Management. His combination of Fortune 500 executive leadership, startup experience, and passion for healthcare innovation uniquely positions him to lead Zera Medical through FDA clearance, commercialization, and long-term growth.

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