

Canton's Organogenesis Revs Up Product Pitch

Slick Ads For Skin Substitute

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Organogenesis, Inc., the Canton-based company that mass-produces a living, cell-based skin substitute, is once again breaking new ground, this time with the first-ever direct-to-consumer advertising campaign.

Stephen Farrell, vice president of marketing for Organogenesis, Inc., said the company launched the new advertising campaign to reach chronic wound sufferers who may not know about the treatment.

"Wound care is an evolving field," he said. "Only 40 percent of the people who have chronic wounds go to specialists."

Organogenesis' Apligraf is the first bio-engineered living cell therapy to receive FDA approval.

Apligraf is a two-inch round white patch that contains two layers of living cells. It is applied to the sore by a physician during a brief inpatient procedure. It eventually integrates into the wound, and helps it heal by encouraging other cells to generate more healthy cells.

The practice has been controversial because the basic material for Apligraf is human foreskin from circumcised baby boys.

Supporters point out those non-healing wounds, which are common among diabetics and people with circulatory problems, often result in amputation.

Farrell said Organogenesis is hoping that its new outreach campaign reaches the tens of thousands of Americans with wounds that won't heal.

The company has begun placing print advertisements in publications for people with diabetes. It has also created an Apligraf Website that will be displayed when people type "foot sore" or some other similar term into an Internet search engine.

And finally, the company has begun placing informational flyers and placards in certain stores.

Farrell said that for the firm's target audience - diabetic Americans age 50 and older who are suffering with wounds that won't heal - the degree of medical empowerment is often very limited.

Organogenesis wants to change that.

"We are saying, 'There is hope, there are alternatives,' " he said.