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May 20, 2015 – It was a meeting of East and West on Wednesday morning at the Innovation Campus where a new deal was signed by USU researchers that could help bring fresh answers in the fight against cancer, diabetes and other diseases.

Representatives from the university and Department of Biological Engineering signed an official research agreement with SORAM Bio-Medicine Research Institute of Seoul, South Korea. The research agreement ultimately aims to improve combined radiotherapy and chemotherapy cancer treatments through the use of naturally-occurring compounds found in ginseng.

USU VP for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies Mark McLellan, left, and Rob Behunin, VP for Advancement and Commercialization, middle, sign a two-year research agreement with Dr. Wonjun Cho, Director of the Soram Bio-Medicine Institute.

USTAR-endowed professor of biological engineering Foster Agblevor is the chief researcher behind the project. Agblevor and his associates at SORAM plan to explore the health-promoting benefits of Korean ginseng and other ginseng species that have been used for centuries in traditional Chinese and Korean medicine.

“The most active ingredients in these extractions are ginsenosides which have been reported to have several curative properties for diseases including type II diabetes, erectile dysfunction and some cancerous tumors,” he writes in a proposal. “There is intense interest in investigating the properties of these extracts for non-traditional medicinal applications. There have also been attempts to develop ginseng hairy roots for ginsenoside applications.”

College of Engineering Dean Christine Hailey and USTAR Professor Foster Agblevor speak to a Korean delegation about a new research agreement at USU.

Agblevor and his team at the BioEnergy Center at the USU Innovation Campus will extract Korean red ginseng using benign solvents and characterize the properties of the extractives. They also plan to cultivate ginseng hairy roots that will be extracted and characterized. The properties of the two extracts will be compared and evaluated in combined radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatments in clinical trials at the SORAM Bio-Medicine Institute.

The research effort will initially be a two-year, \$250,000 project.

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News Coverage by The Herald Journal

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