

SA biotech leaders see Belgium as pathway to global business expansion

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BioMed SA President Ann Stevens said Belgium is a ripe target for international collaboration – especially in regenerative medicine. LYNDSEY JOHNSON/SABJ

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One Alamo City company could be key to a more far-reaching collaboration between San Antonio and Europe.

San Antonio's path to becoming a more prominent international player in health care and the biosciences may run through a European country known as much for its medieval towns as its technology — Belgium. That's the takeaway after speaking with several industry leaders who believe there is a wide avenue for greater collaboration between the two regions.

[Ann Stevens](#), president of BioMed SA, said last week's visit to the Alamo City by an international delegation including Belgian [Princess Astrid](#) is a testament to the collaborative economic possibilities that leaders in that country believe exist in San Antonio — particularly in regenerative medicine.

“It was a unique opportunity to showcase San Antonio’s unique assets and expertise in this new emerging field of medicine along with our strong spirit of collaboration,” Stevens told me when asked about the international delegation.

The Belgian visit comes roughly six months after I reported that San Antonio-based biotech company [INCELL](#) Corp. had entered into a joint venture with a Belgian investment group to form a new company called BioTurnKey. That company is working to accelerate the development and manufacturing of regenerative and personalized medicine products and services in the United States and abroad.

That venture has caused leaders in San Antonio and Belgium to expand their exploration of more collaborative opportunities in biotech, Stevens said.

“In San Antonio, we are looking at opportunities to really synergize the resources,” BioTurnKey CEO [Francois Lesage](#) said. “We have a strong base with INCELL. There is expertise that can be shared. BioTurnKey, we hope, will accelerate this.”

[Mary Pat Moyer](#) — founder, CEO and chief science officer for INCELL — said leaders here and in Belgium are already engaged in work that could lead to developing more biotech companies in San Antonio.

“Part of the BioTurnKey initiative is to form new ventures, new companies,” she said. “Our vision is that each company will form in the U.S. and Europe at the same time so that there will be parallel tracking in both markets. There will be multiple new companies that will be spun out of INCELL and other places. The idea is that they would have a San Antonio and Belgium footprint. That’s the next step.”

Mayor Ivy Taylor said there is a research-driven focus on the biosciences in San Antonio and Belgium that allows for more shared pursuits in biotech.

“The brain power that we’ve got in both places certainly provides a great platform for us to move forward,” she said.

The onus will be on San Antonio leaders to maximize those international opportunities, Stevens said.

“We must continue to build on these early activities and consciously leverage our unique assets,” she said.

“San Antonio is a collaborative community. Belgium is a collaborative community,” Moyer said. “That mindset is important.”

European industry leaders are eager to build on the relationship [INCELL](#) has helped foster.

“Belgium is strong in biotech. So is San Antonio,” Lesage said, noting that the Alamo City is an ideal location compared to other U.S. cities on the two coasts with active bioscience industries. “We are at home here.”

W. Scott Bailey covers health care, tourism, sports business, economic development; he also plans and edits some special reports.