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TECHNOLOGY

Bright idea

Pepper Pike startup introduces light bulbs and filters that block blue light and might lead to the prevention of cancer.

By BRANDON GLENN

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Three John Carroll University scientists have started a new company that they hope will reduce people's risk of developing cancer — one light bulb at a time.

Lighting Innovations LLC of Pepper Pike sells light bulbs, glasses and television and computer filters that block blue light. Blue light disrupts the human body's production of melatonin, a hormone secreted by the pineal gland in the brain that some studies have shown helps fight cancer, according to Dick Hansler, the company's president.

Lighting Innovations' products block blue light from reaching a user's eyes, so the user's body will continue to produce melatonin, according to Dr. Hansler, a former research scientist for 42 years with GE Lighting in East Cleveland who now works as an adjunct professor of physics at John Carroll.

Targeting cancer survivors

Dr. Hansler said his company's target customers are people who are at a high risk of developing cancer, such as cancer survivors or people who are genetically predisposed to the disease.

Dr. Hansler said because clinical trials have not yet determined the relationship



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between blue light and cancer, "the medical profession is unlikely to take a position" on the topic.

Dr. Michael Thun of the American Cancer Society essentially echoed Dr. Hansler's prediction.

"The idea that light exposure at night may increase breast cancer risk by disrupting the body's natural production of melatonin is one of many theories that are potentially interesting, but a very long way from proven," he wrote in an e-mail to *Crain's Cleveland Business*.

Lighting Innovations "is a case in which the technology for designing a new product is well ahead of the evidence that it will have any effect on breast cancer," Dr. Thun wrote.

Dr. Hansler offers two pieces of evidence to back up his assertions about blue light and cancer. First, he said blind people suffer from lower rates of cancer than people who can see, which could be because the blind are producing melatonin all the time. Also, he asserts that studies have shown that people who work night shifts suffer from a higher rate of cancer, because those workers' bodies aren't producing as much melatonin.

So far Lighting Innovations is selling its products only on its web site. Dr. Hansler said the company's site has been up for a couple weeks, but it hasn't made any sales yet.

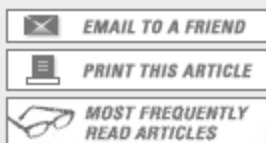
"The site is up, but people have no way of knowing about it," he said.

Dr. Hansler and his partners have paid startup costs of about \$10,000 to \$20,000 for the company out of their own pockets, he said.

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