

# Medical device to launch production

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Alan Donaldson believes his invention will save lives.

The emergency-room nurse invented and developed the Clear Collar, a see-through cervical collar.

His fledgling Clear Collar Inc. hopes to start commercial production of the medical-device in the upcoming months.

Donaldson says his medical experience, which includes more than 20 years as an emergency-room nurse, is behind the idea.

The product allows emergency responders to view the patient's neck for bruising or injury without removing the cervical collar. Such removal can increase the odds of further damage, including paralysis, Donaldson says.

The most common collar has a cushion of foam surrounded by bracing materials and must be removed to view the neck. The Clear Collar is made of two clear plastics.

Donaldson secured a patent for the device in April 2000. He then began to shop the idea around, hammering out details for manufacturing it.

He considered licensing the product. But he says the companies he met with didn't offer him adequate compensation as the inventor. So Donaldson pursued the project on his own, working to get the product to market.

"It's been a long road trying to figure out how to do this," he says.

His venture gained momentum last year as his son-in-law, Cass Ward, and fellow MBA classmates at Queens University of Charlotte created a business

plan for Clear Collar. The students agreed to operate the venture if it proved feasible.

And they won the 2008 McColl School of Business Executive MBA Business Plan Competition.

Now Ward is chief executive, and the Charlotte-based startup is seeking to raise \$1.5 million to launch full-scale production and develop a next-generation product, an adjustable Clear Collar.

The product has caught the attention of Dr. Bertrand Fote, an emergency physician who practices at Rowan Regional Medical Center and CMC-Union. He recently invested in the company. He declines to disclose the amount.

"To me, it's a no brainer" Fote says of

Clear Collar's product. "I think eventually it's going to be the collar to use."

The company plans to manufacture its basic collar in four sizes initially. The future adjustable collar will fit most patients, Ward says. "We want research and development to begin so we can get the adjustable collar out within the first year."

The four-employee company forecasts sales of \$397,000 in the first year. But it hopes to ramp up sales quickly.

Delays in getting the collar to market have had an unexpected benefit, Donaldson says. They've resulted in lower manufacturing costs as well as a better product as plastics have improved, he says.



**Clear Collar CEO Cass Ward (left) and inventor Alan Donaldson.**

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