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Test developed for chromosome defect

Business First of Buffalo - by [Annemarie Franczyk](#) Business First

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Empire Genomics LLC is months away from selling its first commercial product -- a test that quickly detects genetic causes of diseases or medical conditions.

CEO Anthony Johnson said a multi-year, multi-million-dollar agreement has been signed with a U.S.-based company for clinical use of the test. Sales are expected to begin Jan. 1, pending state certification of the company's lab.

Johnson declined to name the company, adding that other, similar contracts are in negotiations. Academic institutions have been using the test for research purposes since March, he said.

Empire Genomics, a new business sprouting from the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, will run tests for labs and sell kits to labs that will do their own testing. The company expects to add about five lab workers, sales and marketing positions in the next year, Johnson said.

Predictions are Empire Genomics will earn more than \$50 million in revenues and create about 45 jobs in its first five years. By that time, the company expects to have established a satellite testing site and have moved from the state Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics & Life Science into its own facility, Johnson said.

The test revolutionizes diagnosis by quantitatively analyzing abnormalities in chromosomes and delivering results in 24 hours. Among its abilities: detection of the smallest known defect that causes Down's syndrome.

Traditional methods in place for the past 50 years were not as accurate and took weeks to perform, said test developer Norma Nowak, director of science and technology at the bioinformatic and life science center.

The test's first clinical application is in pre- and post-natal testing for as many as 100 diseases and conditions. The market for such a diagnostic is big: About 25 percent of babies born globally potentially have indications that could require more in-depth testing, Johnson said. Further applications are being studied for cancer, stem cell and autism research and diagnosis, and drug development.

Johnson, a partner at Buffalo BioSciences, is serving as CEO of Empire Genomics while the company's test is being introduced commercially. Buffalo BioSciences provides biotech companies with guidance and management to move products from the lab into the marketplace.

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