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Commercialize this: 10-minute cancer test

Researchers at the University of Texas at Austin have come up with a simple-to-use and cheap **device** that can detect cancerous cells while a patient waits in the doctor's office. Currently the device tests for oral cancer cells but could likely be adapted to detect cervical cancer cells as well. The device is made of acrylic and contains a fluorescent tag that adheres to proteins found in cancerous cells, known as biomarkers. Patient samples with cancerous cells then glow green under a fluorescent microscope. The equipment needed to perform the test is relatively cheap, and the process takes about 10 minutes.

The research is pioneered by John McDevitt, who is no stranger to commercialization. His **McDevitt Research Labs** is part of the University of Texas, and it lists several technologies that could be turned into startups. He has seen his previous research on biomarkers turn into the venture-backed startup LabNow Corp., which **raised** \$14 million to build a rugged and portable blood testing lab that could be used to monitor AIDS patients in developing countries. LabNow has struggled to get a product built and laid off most of its employees, but the technology works. Perhaps the cancer screening test will fare better in the market. —*Stacey Higginbotham*

See [Aug. 21 story from MIT Technology Review](#)

See [October 2004 story from TheDeal.com](#)

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