

Biotech company affiliated with Memphis-based UTHSC wins \$15M federal contract

By Toby Sells

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[RxBio Inc.](#) has won a federal contract that could be worth up to \$24 million to further develop its drug that may protect against radiation exposure.

The base contract is worth \$15 million with \$9 million in options over the next two years.

The contract was awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority](#).

RxBio is an early-stage biopharmaceutical company that spun out of the [University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis](#).

The drug, known now as Rx100, stemmed from a collaboration among three UTHSC researchers: Dr. Gabor Tigyi, chairman of the university's Department of Physiology; Duane Miller, chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences; and Leonard R. Johnson, professor in the Department of Physiology.

The drug was licensed from the University of Tennessee Research Foundation, which aids in the commercialization of discoveries made at the university. The three and UTHSC pharmacy school alumnus, W. Shannon McCool, then formed RxBio.

So far, the group has funded Rx100 with a mix of private equity and federal money with more than \$5 million coming from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Development of the drug has taken place in the Memphis Bioworks incubator.

Further development will take place within UTHSC, including its Regional Biocontainment Laboratory in the UT-Baptist Research Park.

The drug aids in the survival of those exposed to radiation up to 72 hours after the exposure, according to the group.

While the primary researchers of the drug are based in Memphis and most of the work done on the drug is done in Memphis, RxBio is headquartered in Johnson City, Tenn., where McCool is located.

