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Deisher aims for pro-life vaccine company

October 1, 2010 — 11:08am ET | By [Erica Teichert](#)

Theresa "Tracy" Deisher may be best known for her recent contributions to the [embryonic stem cell funding halt](#), but her participation in the controversial topic is only one of many ways she has melded her pro-life beliefs with her extensive background in biotech. Eleven months ago, Deisher created Ave Maria Biotechnology, a pro-life-based biotech company, which is now worth around \$1 million.

"We are clearly unique in that we are open and upfront about our pro-life mission," Deisher says in an *Xconomy* interview. "Our pro-life work is our top responsibility. For most companies, fiduciary return is the top priority. We hope our investors will make lots of money, but that's not our first objective. We won't compromise our pro-life mission for economic returns."

Many vaccines, including childhood measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) and chickenpox, are created using cell lines from aborted fetuses; the vaccine lineage leads many pro-life parents to reject vaccinating their children. According to Deisher, up to one-tenth of all children are not vaccinated due to these concerns.

So the Seattle native and former ZymoGenetics Immunex and Amgen employee decided to take a stand; using her own money and donated time from a young staff, she built up Ave Maria and received two \$500,000 grants from MJ Murdock Charitable Trust to gain commercial rights to animal-based vaccines previously created by Merck. The MMR vaccines have been cleared by the FDA, but Merck has not marketed them due to their low profit margins, a non-issue for Deisher.

- read the *Xconomy* article

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