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Local faces in dynamic biotech field

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There are hundreds of companies in the biotechnology industry in the Philadelphia region, which is hosting the BIO 2005 convention. To get a sense of the people involved in this dynamic field, here are some of the faces of biotech from the region's corporate, investment and academic communities:



With \$280 million in investment capital at her disposal, **Brenda D. Gavin** is one of the most powerful venture-capital investors in the Philadelphia region.

As a managing partner at Quaker BioVentures Inc., she also is the rare exception in an industry where, according to a national survey, 90 percent of top managers are male.

A decade ago, she became the first woman to head the Greater Philadelphia Venture Group.

Given that Quaker is the largest biotech-focused fund in the Philadelphia region, she estimates she's among the top 10 women nationally investing in biotechnology and other life-sciences companies, but pays tribute to the such pioneers as Ginger Moore and Pat Cloherty.

Gavin, 57, an epidemiologist and veterinary scientist, is the scientific brains at Quaker, where her fellow managing partner, P. Sherrill Neff, is the operational expert, according to people in the venture community.

She holds more board memberships at key technology institutions locally "than any other person I know of, male or female," said Stephen M. Goodman, a venture expert at the law firm of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius L.L.P.

Gavin said she has forged ahead by being collaborative, not competitive.

Unlike software companies, nascent biotechnology companies consume vast amounts of cash and take a long time to bear fruit. It's the norm for firms such as Quaker to invest as part of coalitions rather than alone.

Such "unbelievably fascinating" things are happening in biotechnology, she said, that 20 years from now, people may trace cures to certain cancers and intractable viral diseases to current times.

Before Quaker, Gavin helped manage S.R. One Ltd., the venture capital arm of GlaxoSmithKline, and an affiliated fund, Euclid S.R. She moved to Quaker because of its regional focus - from North Carolina to New York. She wanted to "spend time with the companies and not on airplanes," she said.

Her fascination with venture investing was triggered at business school in Texas in the late 1970s, she said - by a female professor.

- Porus P. Cooper

