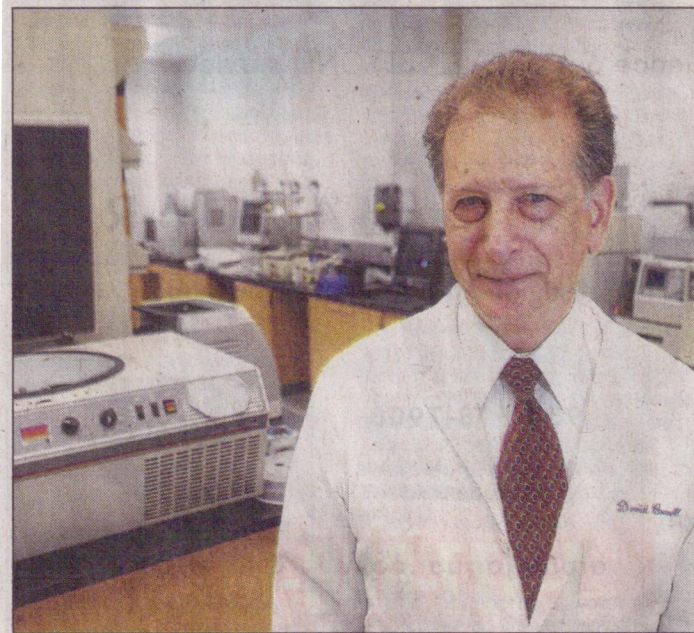


# Jupiter biotech firm developing FAU prof's anti-skin cancer gel



BRUCE R. BENNETT/Staff Photographer

Stephen Chakoff, president & CEO of CHS Pharma in Jupiter, bought the rights to Herbert Weissbach's rub-on mixture that Chakoff hopes could help prevent some skin cancers.

By JEFF OSTROWSKI  
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

JUPITER — By combining a couple of common compounds in a rub-on gel, biotech entrepreneur Stephen Chakoff hopes to kill skin cancer.

Chakoff is president and chief executive of CHS Pharma, a Jupiter-based company developing a one-two punch of gels that promise to make pre-cancerous skin growths disappear.

One gel is dark orange and includes the anti-inflammatory sulindac, which long has been taken in pill form by arthritis sufferers. The other is clear and uses hydrogen peroxide to activate the cancer-killing action of the sulindac.

The effects of the mixture were discovered by

Herbert Weissbach, director of Florida Atlantic Univer-



Weissbach

sity's Center for Molecular Biology and Biotechnology. Weissbach, in 2006, licensed his discovery to CHS Pharma.

In a 2009 article in the *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology*, Weissbach and four other researchers wrote that sulindac and hydrogen peroxide killed actinic keratoses in five patients.

Actinic keratoses, or AKs, are crusty or scaly bumps on the skin. A fraction of the growths can metastasize into squamous cell carcinoma.

AKs are common, and

See CANCER, 5D ▶

# CHS Pharma wanted to be close to Scripps

## ► CANCER *from 1D*

dermatologists treat the growths by burning or freezing them off, or by prescribing topical drugs such as Solarase or Aldara. However, Aldara can cause severe skin irritation.

Chakoff says his product causes little or no irritation and will work better than Aldara on AKs on the arms and legs.

"We believe it'll be the most effective topical treatment," Chakoff said.

CHS is aiming for a piece of the \$800 million market for AK drugs. Chakoff hopes to begin selling CHS's product by 2015.

Conducting clinical trials will cost \$15 million to \$20 million, Chakoff said. He said

the company already has raised \$1.5 million from investors, including Neil Flanzraich, the former president of generic drug company Ivax.

CHS is the latest addition to Palm Beach County's burgeoning biotech industry. To be closer to Scripps Florida and FAU, the company moved from Hallandale Beach to an 800-square-foot office in Jupiter last year.

"We wanted to be in close proximity to the scientific research," Chakoff said.

CHS also is working on an over-the-counter sunscreen, and Chakoff isn't stopping with skin care. He sees potential treatments for dry macular degeneration, an eye disease, and for heart problems.

© jeff\_ostrowski@pbpost.com