Innovation is everywhere – from smartphones in virtually every consumer’s pocket to groundbreaking business and operating models shaking up entire industries. How can disruptive innovations make a positive impact on healthcare in general and the Jefferson enterprise in particular?

That’s the central question that the Office of Strategic Business Development and Partnerships at Jefferson, established at the end of last year, is addressing. Rajesh Aggarwal, MD, PhD, FCRS, FACS, serves as Senior Vice President for Strategic Business Development in addition to maintaining his bariatric surgery practice as a Professor of Surgery.

Dr. Aggarwal explains that the Office isn’t facilitating the traditional “technology transfer” model that universities use to spin off homegrown innovations. Rather, this Office is looking for outside companies with pilot solutions or minimally viable products to “spin in” to the Jefferson enterprise.

“We are working with companies to co-develop and co-implement innovations, including identifying clinical and financial ROI...”

The Office of Strategic Business Development and Partnerships is working closely with the Clinical Research Office to ensure that all studies are approved by the Institutional Review Board and accepted by scientific, peer-reviewed publications. Yet Dr. Aggarwal is quick to note that not every stage of the innovation process requires a formal study.

“We can do a quick trial as long as it’s HIPAA compliant,” he explains. “A pilot study can inform a power analysis – which helps confirm the viability of the innovation and the need for a full-blown trial.”

One of the Office’s first partners is Lifeguard Health Networks, which has developed digital technology that enables cancer patients to self-report outcomes.

“If patients report their outcomes at least once a day, providers can be more mindful of side effects or complications, and they can intervene before a patient has adverse outcomes. That can improve quality of life and lengthen survival,” Dr. Aggarwal says. He adds that while it seems simple, the company’s technology is underpinned by a complex set of algorithms and processes.

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The Office is collaborating with the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center to explore how Jefferson can implement the solution – including what questions to ask, when to trigger alerts to clinicians and how to handle patient issues as they arise. Running a trial of the technology is a way to test impact on patient outcomes and satisfaction and to identify opportunities to reduce costs and/or increase revenue.

Above all, he says, the Office is operating as a start-up within a 194-year-old institution: “We aim to be very agile. When a company gets in touch with us, we don’t want to think in terms of weeks or months, but days or even hours.”

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