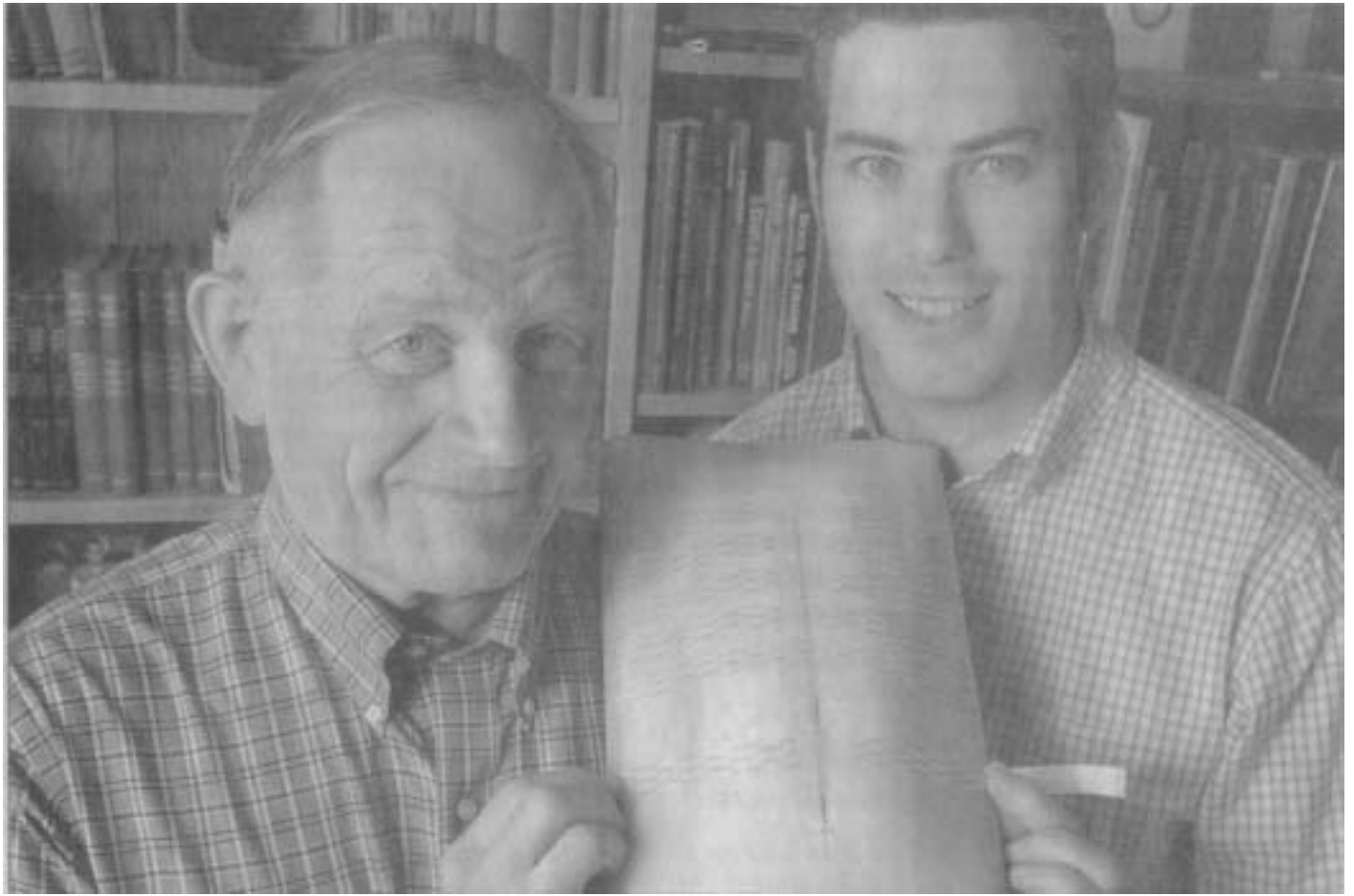


LEONARD LEE BRANCHES OUT



Leonard Lee, left, and designer Matt Archibald show their new surgical product called SutureSafe, an elastic tape that takes the strain off individual stitches, allowing patients to move with less pain and more confidence that the stitches will hold.

Tape cuts the worry from stitches

Latest medical product from Canica aims at reduced scarring and improved mobility for sutured patients, writes **HOWAIDA SOROUR**.

Canica Design Inc., the medical products company founded by Ottawa's Leonard Lee, has unveiled its latest surgical product, which it says is a major advance over products currently available to doctors.

The product, SutureSafe, was unveiled last week at congress of operating room nurses in Washington, DC. According to Canica, it is intended to keep sutured or stapled incisions firmly closed while eliminating pain, giving patients back their mobility and reducing scarring.

SutureSafe pulls a newly sutured or stapled incision together securely and distributes any pull on the incision to the adhesive portion that's

anchored to healthy tissue on either side of the incision. The entire product is elasticated.

The elastic feature is what makes this a "dynamic" rather than "static" system and means that SutureSafe can eliminate the sharp pain or discomfort patients associate with sutures pulling when they move.

"That was an unexpected benefit," said Dr. Michael Bell, a plastic surgeon at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

"Where most adhesive surgical tapes adhere across the wound, ours has elastic that doesn't adhere to the healing tissue," said Matthew Archibald, the bio-medical engineer at Canica who designed the product. "The tape that goes down on the skin on either side will also stretch with the skin so it prevents skin shear (tearing and blistering)."

Dr. Bell believes that because the system eliminates any separation of an inci-

sion, it could reduce scarring for most patients. Also, SutureSafe is translucent allowing health professionals to monitor the wound as it heals.

"The beauty of the system is that you can put it on any wound or every wound," he said.

The product took 14 months to develop and test, according to Mr. Archibald, 25, who joined Canica straight out of the University of Guelph 16 months ago.

"This was the first project that I was given," he said. "I was excited from the beginning."

According to Mr. Lee, the individual SutureSafe will cost between one and two dollars.

"We haven't bullet-proofed the manufacturing yet," he said, "so we can't tell exactly."

Alden Rattew, the executive director of Canica, said more than 80 per cent of visitors at the Washington event wanted samples of the product. The company has also been ap-

proached by four Canadian medical suppliers interested in carrying it he said.

"This is the type of product that will get put on in intensive care units, not in the operating room," said Mr. Lee. "We have presented it to some surgeons, but it will be a nurse's tool."

Christine Pilon, assistant director of nursing at the University of Ottawa, says she will need to try SutureSafe and get some patient feedback before she knows whether it works as suggested.

"Like all new innovations, it looks really good," she said.

Canica has already made a name for itself in the safety scalpel market, coming up with the world's first retractable-ejectable blade scalpel, as well as introducing a number of dynamic wound closure systems that are being used in surgery today.

Mr. Lee says SutureSafe should be on the market by May 2006.