

SUCCESS STORY

HeadStrait Labs

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Small Business
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Industry:
Surgical and Medical
Instrument Manufacturing

Year Founded:
2023

SBDC Assistance:
Grant and Procurement
Opportunities, Contact
Opportunities, Business Coaching

Consultant:
Cindi Oliver



HeadStrait Labs Advances Innovation as DNVC Winner

HeadStrait Labs is redefining how patients with suspected central nervous system injuries are stabilized and monitored during emergency care—and that bold vision has earned national recognition, IRB-approved clinical studies with renowned hospital systems like UPMC, and nearly \$700,000 in funding raised to date.

Each year, 12.7 million people in the U.S. experience a head or neck injury that requires immobilization and emergency transportation. Patients are immobilized using devices that have not seen meaningful innovation since the 1960s. As a result, up to one in four people experience a secondary injury during emergency transport. To help with this need, they invented the EVAC-1 Splint with SMARTMotion sensors.

HeadStrait Labs won the 2025 to 2026 Duquesne New Venture Challenge, a prestigious, multi-stage entrepreneurship competition hosted by Duquesne University's Palumbo Donahue School of Business. Now in its seventh year, DNVC continues to attract early-stage ventures from across the country and serves as a launchpad for founders tackling complex, real-world problems through innovation.

Chosen from a competitive pool of semifinalists, HeadStrait Labs stood out for its mission-driven approach and breakthrough medical device and healthtech analytics platform aimed at improving emergency response outcomes for patients with suspected brain and spine injuries.

For the final round of competition, HeadStrait Labs submitted an executive summary, a comprehensive business plan, and a formal investor-style presentation. The team then presented its venture to a live panel of distinguished judges composed of industry experts, investors, and business leaders. In addition to recognition, the DNVC offers more than \$41,000 in cash prizes, along with valuable professional services for top performers, including legal support through the Thomas R. Kline School of Law and further SBDC consulting.

For HeadStrait Labs, winning the DNVC competition represents more than competition success—it marks a critical milestone in the company's journey to bring life-improving medical innovation to market. By refining its business model, strengthening its strategy, and presenting to seasoned judges, the team continues to build momentum toward meaningful impact in emergency medical care.



If you are an emergency physician, EMT, first responder, or healthtech investor, HeadStrait Labs is actively looking to connect. They are building a smarter, data driven standard for prehospital care and are seeking partners who understand the urgency of this problem. You can learn more about www.headstraitlabs.com or reach their team directly at info@headstraitlabs.com.

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