

06 Sep 2023 | News

Abbott Buys Bigfoot Biomedical – But What Lurks In The Forest?

by [Barnaby Pickering](#)

Abbott and Bigfoot Biomedical have worked as partners for more than half a decade but will now continue as one. Analysts are questioning whether the merger will simply be a tuck-in for Abbott, or enable it to release an insulin pump of their own.

After more than six years of diabetes platform co-development, [Abbott](#) is acquiring [Bigfoot Biomedical](#) for an undisclosed price.

Bigfoot's Bigfoot Unity system is an insulin management platform that can integrate smart insulin pen caps with data from a continuous glucose monitor (CGM) to provide insulin dosing recommendations. The US Food and Drug Administration cleared Unity in 2021.

Unity currently works exclusively with Abbott continuous glucose monitors – primarily its Libre 2 CGM – but Bigfoot is agnostic on insulin. Unity will work with any smart cap that can be attached to it.

The financial terms of the deal has not been disclosed. Subject to customary closing conditions, the deal will close in the third quarter of this year, according to the companies.

“The acquisition of Bigfoot Biomedical will combine two leaders in different aspects of diabetes care: continuous glucose monitoring and insulin dosing support,” said Jared Watkin, senior vice president of Abbott’s diabetes care business. “Bringing our companies together will allow us to further develop connected solutions for making diabetes management even more personal and precise.”

Bigfoot Biomedical told *Medtech Insight* that the company's roll-out of Unity, through the pharmacy channel, is progressing well. “We anticipate that we will fill our first prescriptions

within the week," it said. "This is still a limited launch and we expect to have our product more broadly available in early 2024."

Big End For Bigfoot's Big Year

In January, Bigfoot sold some of its insulin pump-related intellectual property to Insulet for \$25m. At the time, management at the company said the money would be put towards promoting and selling Unity. (Also see "[Minute Insight: Insulet Acquires Insulin Pump Patents From Bigfoot, AGC](#)" - Medtech Insight, 14 Feb, 2023.)

Bigfoot promoted some impressive data from a retrospective study of Unity at the annual American Diabetes Association conference. (Also see "[Exec Chat: Bigfoot Making Strides In Pharmacy Channel With Unity Diabetes Management](#)" - Medtech Insight, 19 Jul, 2023.)

A 58-patient cohort – 76% of whom had previously used a CGM – were onboarded onto Unity to assess its impact on HbA1c levels. 48 patients completed the study. The 36 with prior experience using CGM saw their average baseline HbA1c levels reduce from 8.2% to 7.3% after six months. For the 12 without prior CGM experience, HbA1c levels reduced from 9% to 7.1%.

"We see this acquisition as a vote of confidence from Abbott in the future need for insulin." – Marie Thibault

This finding supports the offering Unity to tech-naïve, newly diagnosed diabetics, as well as those who are accustomed to CGM.

Throughout the year, Wall Street commentary on Bigfoot has been mostly positive and focused on Bigfoot's commercial rollout of Unity.

Those with an eye on the industry could see that it would finally offer diabetics much more choices with their insulin than competing options from Lilly and Novo Nordisk that are insulin pen-locked. US insurance providers have usually only covered one or two manufacturers' products.

Unity fits in "nicely" with Abbott's pre-existing diabetes offerings, BTIG analyst Marie Thibault wrote on 5 September. She was "not surprised" by the announcement – due to the two's prior collaboration – and that the acquisition is likely to "tuck in favorably" for Abbott.

"If reimbursement is more widely established in the US, the integrated ecosystem could drive some share shift from competitive systems toward Libre among those on MDI interested in smart pens," Thibault wrote.

Thibault pointed out that Bigfoot has long-been developing a closed-loop insulin delivery system since it acquired the assets of the bankrupted Asante in 2015 and the US Food and Drug Administration granted that technology its breakthrough designation in February. Bigfoot sold AID (automated insulin delivery) technology to Insulet, but Abbott may still be interested in that technology.

She also noted that the emergence of GLP-1 drugs could put a dent in the demand for CGM and insulin pens, but will not replace glucose control technology. "We see this acquisition as a vote of confidence from Abbott in the future need for insulin." (Also see "[The Book Of GLP-1s: For Medtech They Giveth, As Well As Taketh Away](#)" - Medtech Insight, 8 Aug, 2023.)

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– Jayson Bedford

Other analysts wrote that the Bigfoot-Abbott deal is not a surprise. The deal is Bigfoot's "most logical exit," according to Jayson Bedford of Raymond James.

Bigfoot "broadens Abbott's offering with a more comprehensive insulin management solution. It also gives Abbott's reps a new tool to address endocrinologists," Bedford wrote in a 5 September note. "Abbott likely did not pay much for the asset, and do not believe Bigfoot will have a material impact on Abbott's near-term growth."

He was more skeptical about any potential for an insulin pump to emerge from the deal. "We do not see a threat of Abbott introducing a pump given Bigfoot sold their pump and AID IP to Insulet for \$25m," he wrote. "Although Bigfoot has historically discussed plans to develop a pump, it was not on the table in this acquisition, and we do not expect Abbott to develop a pump from these assets."