

Giving Pétur His Life Back

A remarkable recovery takes place due to Kerecis' unique fish-skin technology for tissue regeneration.

By Paige Ferguson

Kerecis is pioneering the use of fish-skin and fatty acids in the globally expanding cellular-therapy and regenerative medicine markets; the products from the company's patented fish skin technologies are used to support tissue regeneration and repair. The Kerecis technology was invented by the company's founder and CEO, Fertram Sigurjonsson, with a mission to become a world leader in regenerating damaged human tissues by sustainably harnessing nature's own remedies.

Unlike Kerecis products, most other tissue-transplant products are based on tissues of human and porcine origin. Many of these products are not ideal substitutes for tissue regeneration because heavy processing is needed to eliminate the risk of disease transmission. This harsh, anti-viral treatment additionally removes most of the material's natural components, making it dissimilar to human skin.

Kerecis offers a variety of unique advantages as a company including non-allergenic and bio-compatible products, sustainable harvesting and manufacturing, and no known cultural or religious barriers for clinician and patient acceptance. Furthermore, Kerecis is unique because there is no existing disease-transfer risk between cold-water fish and humans. The patented fish skin is gently processed to keep its similarity to human skin and retain natural cellular components that aid in the regeneration process. Compared to mammalian-based skin substitutes, fish skin offers improved economics and clinical performance with no cultural constraints on usage.

Besides Kerecis' unique technology, the company creates tremendous value from a small amount of waste with immeasurable benefits. Innovation in Iceland and operations worldwide allow doctors to heal patients, to the benefit of families, friends and entire communities. Everyone has an interest in sustaining the value creation and the factors that contribute to it.

Kerecis' production operations are in the Westfjords, an area in the Arctic known for its commitment to environmental protection. As a leading employer in the town of Isafjordur, it creates life-saving value from waste as Kerecis produces medical devices from locally procured, certified sustainably sourced fish. The manufacturing process requires no harsh chemicals that might harm the environment, and it uses exclusively clean, renewable energy.

On top of the commitment to sustainability, Kerecis also supports Sustainable Development Goals including the health and well-being of all employees, innovation

circular solutions, and responsible consumption and production. To better engage the larger conversation, Kerecis also strongly supports groups such as the Arctic Circle, the Ocean Cluster, and Festa, Iceland's leading corporate social responsibility organization.

A testimonial to the power of Kerecis' fish-skin technology can be found in the life-changing story of Pétur Oddsson, who suffered from severe burns following an accident while repairing a power station in Önundarfjörður in the Icelandic Westfjords in September of 2020. Pétur does not remember anything from the accident, or even months prior to when the accident took place. What his colleagues told him who were on location at the time is all he can recall.

Pétur was airlifted to the hospital in Reykjavik after the accident. About half of his body was covered in burns, and he had sustained internal injuries as well. For 100 days following the accident Pétur was in a coma while periodically undergoing multiple operations. "Later the doctors told me, they never thought he would survive," his wife Sigurlín recalls and adds "I think that without Kerecis, he would probably not be alive today." Pétur recalls, "When you wake up looking like that, you may not have much will to live to begin with. You only look at what is wrong, not what can be improved. It was a completely black night to begin with". Although Pétur was feeling down, over time his optimism grew, "There was the big step in March when I could eat my first soup, broccoli soup, the best food I've ever had," he said.

A large part of Pétur's rehabilitation was also due to his grandson. Pétur's daughter lives in Reykjavik where he went through treatment and rehabilitation. A few days after the accident she gave birth to a son, Róbert Birnir, who Pétur saw for the first time after he came out of a 100-day coma. Ever since then their relationship has been very close. "He has been a good rehabilitation, just playing with him and doing whatever I can," Pétur says about his grandson. Although almost 50% of Pétur's body was burned in the accident, his treatment with Kerecis fish-skin technology helped to give him his life back.

The ability to give Pétur his life back via treatment for his injuries with Kerecis' fish-skin demonstrates the core values and purpose of the company itself. The capability to create a minimally processed, sustainable fish-skin substitute that can aid in tissue regeneration has been a remarkable deliverable for Kerecis. In addition to the unique science behind Kerecis products, their fish-skin products have been able to have a direct, positive impact in patients' lives.

For more information on Kerecis, visit kerecis.com or click here.