A medical device firm started by a team of five interdisciplinary students from Utah State University, the University of Utah, and the University of Wyoming won the $25,000 grand prize at Utah’s statewide medical device competition. The firm, Optima Recovery, created a device that provides novel physical therapy that performs both hot and cold therapy through one device. Aggies Josh Lyman, ’19, Economics, Caleb Adams, ’20, Accounting, and Luke Olsen, ’21, Mechanical Engineering, joined Todd Muller and Nick Lewis to create the company.

The market currently offers different products for hot therapy or cold therapy. Further, these products require lengthy preparation and frequent clean-up. Optima incorporates both hot and cold therapy into a single, portable device and its design reduces preparation time and removes the need for clean-up. In the next year, the founders hope to further develop Optima, file for a utility patent, and prepare to begin sales. “Without funding, none of this would be possible. The Bench to Bedside competition has sparked an entrepreneurial spirit in all of us and we couldn’t be more grateful to the team and the University of Utah for this opportunity,” noted Lyman.
Bench to Bedside (B2B) is a statewide seven-month program hosted at the University of Utah where student teams form “startup” companies to identify an unmet clinical need and design a technology solution to address that need. In that seven-month time period, students define a clinical problem, evaluate the patent landscape, establish a regulatory pathway, create a proof of concept prototype, and then develop a go-to-market strategy for commercialization. The program culminates in April with a formal presentation of team projects at the annual Bench to Bedside Competition. The event draws participation from faculty physicians, residents, industry leaders, venture capital firms, and university leadership. Projects are presented by team members, then evaluated and scored by a VIP panel of judges. Top teams are awarded milestone funding to support further project development.