

Cape-based startup set to disrupt SA healthtech space

 By Johannes Masiteng

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InnoHealth, a Cape Town-based healthtech startup, recently announced that it has secured an undisclosed seven-figure investment from a Hong Kong-based VC.



L to R: InnoHealth co-founders Dr Chad Marthinussen, Abdul-Malick Salie and Dr Wade Palmer. | Image supplied

The seed capital will go towards expanding the company's MyPocketHealth app, an AI-based digital healthcare platform that is set to disrupt the South African healthtech space and position InnoHealth at the forefront of digital healthcare in the country.

InnoHealth was founded in 2020 by medical doctors Chad Marthinussen and Wade Palmer, as well as chartered accountant Abdul-Malick Salie, with a focus on providing solutions for quality, affordable and equitable healthcare to everyone on the African continent. Since starting out, the InnoHealth team has made massive strides within the healthtech space with their innovations, the latest being the MyPocketHealth app launching later this year countrywide.

I caught up with co-founders, Dr Marthinussen and Dr Palmer, to find out more about InnoHealth, MyPocketHealth app and the South African healthtech space.

Please briefly tell us about InnoHealth

Dr Wade Palmer: InnoHealth Technology Solutions is a company focused on providing healthcare solutions by leveraging technology and our intimate knowledge of our healthcare industry to overcome barriers to accessing healthcare services from a location, resource and financial point of view. Our objective at InnoHealth is to provide quality, affordable and equitable overall wellness to all South Africans and the greater continent of Africa.

Dr Chad Marthinussen: Along with healthtech, we are focused on leveraging the latest technology in the biotech space to improve vaccine development in Africa.

How and why did you get started?

Dr Palmer: With both Dr Marthinussen and I having been trained in South Africa and having worked within our public healthcare sector, we both identified multiple points that could be optimised and improved on, taking into account the limited

number of healthcare workers, infrastructure, physical access and financial access. Historically, the previously disadvantaged had been excluded from quality and equitable healthcare, and we intend to correct that with the use of technology and our healthcare partners.

Dr Marthinussen: Chad had started penning his vision for decentralised care in 2015 while studying for exams. The clear lack of technology integration within the healthcare sector drove him to honing his skills as a healthcare entrepreneur.

■ ***Tell us a bit about the MyPocketHealth app.***

Dr Palmer: MyPocketHealth app is a wellness platform which, together with remote patient diagnostic devices, will provide access to physical healthcare services, mental wellbeing services and financial wellness opportunities. The intention is to provide a wellness ecosystem that provides low-cost healthcare and financial wellness by bringing the healthcare the patient needs to the device they have.

“ Your health in the palm of your hands... Coming soon... [@mypockethealth @innohealthza#healthandwellness #AI #SouthAfrica #Africa #Virtualhealth pic.twitter.com/E9r1bugKhU](#)— Dr Wade Palmer (MD) (@DrWadePalmer) [July 10, 2021](#) ”

■ ***What solutions will the app bring to the local healthcare industry?***

Dr Palmer: With the use of, amongst other things, our 'Uwell' remote diagnostic device that ties into our virtual consults, the patient is now able to facilitate and be a part of the consultation process anywhere in our country.

Additionally, the mental wellness platform will provide access to mental healthcare services aimed at preventative psychotherapy. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us the seriousness of the mental health pandemic that now plagues our country. The MyPocketHealth app brings these services to the patients that previously never had access to it.

■ ***You recently secured a seven-figure investment for MyPocketHealth app. How will it help position the app as the leading digital healthcare platform in South Africa?***

Dr Marthinussen: One of the key shortcomings for telehealth in South Africa is the integration of technology. The investment is driving the app development of our ecosystem as well as ensuring that we are able to leverage existing local and international infrastructure.

■ ***What does the future of the South African healthtech space look like?***

Dr Marthinussen: Africa has attracted a large amount of attention from investors. The opportunities to improve patient outcomes through technology are vast and we believe that, through proper partnerships, collaboration and adequate funding, we can put South Africa at the forefront on the African continent.

■ ***What advice would you give to other aspiring entrepreneurs, particularly in the healthtech space?***

Dr Palmer: Identify a problem, find a solution and implement it. If a solution does not already exist, create it yourself or in partnership with like-minded individuals. Solutions don't exist until someone takes the leap to create it. Be that someone.

■ ***As an entrepreneur, what would you like to see changed in the South African startup landscape?***

Dr Palmer: I would love to see VC funders having more faith in young South African entrepreneurs. There are thousands of young minds with amazing ideas but no opportunity to execute or bring it to life. All we need is an opportunity and guidance. I'm certain that the young minds of South Africa have a lot to offer our country's advancement in all areas of the economy. We just need some backing.

▣ *Where would you like to see InnoHealth in the next five years?*

Dr Palmer: In the next five years, I'd love to see InnoHealth providing solutions and the platform for solutions in healthcare in both the private and public health sector. My hope is that InnoHealth becomes a catalyst for healthcare solutions, not only for South Africa but also the African continent at large.

Finally, it would be a great accomplishment if InnoHealth is at the forefront of improving the lives and wellbeing of millions of South Africans and Africans abroad.

ABOUT JOHANNES MASITENG

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