



## At DC to VC, startups talk ACA exchanges and more

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Co-located at Health 2.0, Morgenthaler Venture’s DC to VC event, a startup contest that aims to bring together government policymakers, venture capitalists, and entrepreneurs, had a special resonance this year: It happened to be timed the day before the opening of nationwide health insurance exchanges, as mandated by the Affordable Care Act. Pitching to a room full of investors, entrepreneurs painted a picture of a new healthcare world of patient empowerment — not just people choosing their health insurance on an open market, but also participating more directly in their own healthcare and wellness.



“There’s two things we want you to know,” Farzad Mostashari, outgoing National Coordinator for Health Information Technology said at the event. “The first thing is that we are 100 percent committed to the continuation of the Affordable Care Act. The second is that we are very open to the direction of letting other people help. Letting brokers, navigators help simplify the decisions employers have to make.”

One startup, Benefitter, has its business model centered on helping employers make sense of post-ACA insurance options, helping them find situations where both the employee and the employer could save money by shifting employees onto the public health insurance market. The Rock Health company officially launched last month, and according to founder and CEO Brian Poger, has already signed up “hundreds” of employers.

DaisyBill has a similar focus, but rather than helping companies make sense of insurance options, the New York City-based company helps providers make sense of worker’s compensation. Founder and CEO Catherine Montgomery explained that the number of different rules and regulations in different states makes worker’s compensation highly inefficient and slow, with many claims going unpaid and some providers refusing to see worker’s comp patients because they don’t believe they’ll be paid.

“In 2011, employers spent more on claims administration than they did on actual medical treatment for injured workers,” Montgomery said. “DaisyBill is the TurboTax of worker’s compensation. It takes them moments to create a correct and compliant bill that gets paid instead

of denied.” She said the company is already working with all kinds of providers — doctors as well as physical therapists, mental health professionals, and others. In the future, the company might make employer-facing software as well.

Inder Singh of Kinsa Health, the company offering a low-cost smartphone-connected thermometer as a gateway to realtime health mapping, revealed a little more about the company’s business plan. Because the thermometer is so inexpensive to produce, and the product works better the more are being used, Kinsa is partnering to sell batches of branded thermometers for organizations to give away for free. They are already working with a children’s hospital, a large physician group, and have partnered with “the two largest thermometer distributors in the US and Europe” to get Kinsa into stores. Kinsa won the consumer contest at the event.

Another company, MedWhat, also offers consumers a way to get health advice before going to the doctor. The company offers a free app that uses a natural language algorithm to provide a vetted search engine for health information. The company is offering the app free to consumers, and partnering with insurers, providers and pharma companies, who can offer a branded version of the app and use the information about what sorts of questions people are asking to improve their business.

Trak, men’s home fertility tracker from Sandstone Diagnostics

A couple of companies offered consumer products to improve patient engagement outside the hospital. OMsignal demoed their vitals-sensing clothing and announced a planned clinical trial for atrial fibrillation, stressing that they’re looking into products for both fitness and clinical settings.

Sandstone Diagnostics is developing a home fertility test for men, on a platform that could eventually be used for many other kinds of diagnostics. Called Trak, it’s the first home male fertility count to offer the user quantitative data on sperm count and motility. The company has already received a \$150,000 NIH grant.



“This brings the wife or partner into it,” said CEO Greg Sommer. “Men are out there looking just as much as women are, they know they have a problem and they’re looking for a solution.”

Other companies were already preparing for other consequences of healthcare reform, like the ongoing shift toward accountable care. Amplify Health, which presented just last week at Rock Health’s demo day, was also in attendance at DC to VC, emphasizing their customer John C. Lincoln Health Network, the company’s first ACO user. Amplify, which took first place in the



enterprise competition, combines EHR data with claims data to better inform primary care providers about their practices.

Qualaris Healthcare Solutions is offering a software as a service product to reduce hospital-caused injuries of various kinds: falls, hospital-acquired infections, and pressure ulcers. Using a paperless system, the software helps hospitals audit practices and create an improvement plan. In a three month trial, the system was able to reduce falls by 90 percent, according to CEO James Wolfe.