Meet healthwords.ai, the AI-powered self-care platform transforming how we manage our own health

As part of our quick founder questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Arsalan Karim, CEO and Co-Founder of healthwords.ai about the importance of selfcare, trusting AI with our health and how the platform can significantly reduce the burden on healthcare systems

Temps de lecture : minute

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I started _healthwords.ai_ with my former university classmate, Charles Ebubedike, after we were encouraged by one of our lecturers, Professor Ivor Ebenezer, to explore how new technologies would upend traditional consumer health and wellness markets.

What stuck in my mind was when he said that as access to technology expanded, people would become eager to take a more active role in their health.

Today, this seems obvious but it wasn't as clear back then. We wanted to challenge the status quo, and later found healthword.ai.

Tell us about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you

reach customers and so on?

We are a leading AI powered consumer health platform that recreates the experience of seeking advice at a pharmacy, by delivering fast, simple and accurate self-care information and OTC solutions directly through our platform.

It provides a long-awaited solution to the enormous amount of pressure on healthcare systems by enabling consumers to access quality self-care advice for minor ailments, as they can often be self-diagnosed and self-treated.

On this journey, we are supported by a multidisciplinary team including tech, health and finance experts – including our Chairman John Molter, a 38-year veteran of Procter & Gamble and our Head of Business Growth, Alessandro Barnaba, former Global Chairman of Investment Banking at J.P. Morgan.

How does healthwords.ai answer an unmet need?

Around 80% of healthcare issues today can be treated by the patients themselves, yet many still turn to the NHS which has led to crippling waitlists and inflated the UK's healthcare bill.

The UK's flagship Pharmacy First plan was intended to address this by allowing patients to get treatment for common conditions from their local pharmacy, but is under threat after a record number of chemists closed in the last year.

Since in-person treatment is unable to keep up with demand – and often not necessary to address a health condition – a change in approaching healthcare is needed, and our self-care platform is the solution to this

transformation.

At healthwords.ai, we challenge the notion that humans are required in all instances of healthcare and believe AI can help advise users on when self-care is sufficient or when in-person medical care is needed.

How can AI solve the challenges of self-care?

For AI to effectively support patients, it needs to be able to converse like a medical professional and this is where most models fall down – but is an approach we advocate for, with the average number of messages per conversation on our platform reaching over 20.

Patients start a 'conversation', like you would with your pharmacist or GP, that probes and presses to reach the best outcome, whether that be general advice, an OTC product directly purchased on the platform, or direction towards an in-person consultation.

Given that over 85% of users would recommend the platform to family or friends, with more than 90% saying they would use it again, I'm confident in that we're addressing the challenges associated with self-care in a way that other digital models fail to do.

Can consumers trust AI with their health?

It depends which platform you use!

Most digital-led consumer health platforms are simple decision trees and are limited in their ability to converse with patients. Meanwhile, the large language models, such as ChatGPT and Copilot, are notorious for providing wildly inaccurate advice.

For instance, researchers at Long Island University in New York asked

ChatGPT 39 medical questions but found that it could only provide accurate answers to around 1 in every 4 questions, when compared to those answers written by trained pharmacists.

healthwords.ai, however, leverages an extensive library with over 1 million words of medical content on thousands of the most common medical enquiries answered by medical professionals, to then provide materials and products that precisely match the user's needs.

What's more, select conversations on our platform are reviewed by our dedicated team with over 250 years of combined medical experience spanning across 9 medical specialties, who confirm that the AI's information and products precisely match the consumers' needs.

Can you tell us more about your experience building a proprietary AI platform, with a filed patent in the US?

Our technology is powered by state-of-the-art machine learning algorithms and managed by our expert in-house technology team. These algorithms leverage a massive library of medical content, which facilitates informed and contextually relevant decisions.

We have fine-tuned the Generative Pretrained Transformer (GPT) model with medical content to generate tailored and unique responses. Our proprietary system is protected by a filed patent in the US, and its end-to-end nature ensures rigorous data security and privacy.

What I have learnt through this process is that the product is never finished. When building new technology, there will be many different iterations before it truly works. We launched four prior versions of healthwords.ai before we reached the stage we are at now. While it might seem daunting, I think it is an important process to embrace, as it's how I

know we're continually striving to make the best product possible.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

We first started a company called Clinova in 2006 which became famous for its O.R.S Hydration Tablets, and helped us generate a significant revenue stream. To accompany Clinova, we then developed an AI platform called Caidr, which became healthwords.ai in 2023.

During this journey, the company has experienced growth after growth, and this year has been phenomenal for us, seeing usage on our platform increase by 222%.

Tell us about the working culture at healthwords.ai

As a company on a mission to innovate, that ethos is embedded in our culture. We believe in fostering creativity and ensuring everyone has the space to grow, embodied by our flat structure that allows people to engage with work that interests them.

As a growing company spread across the globe, we have a unique culture that celebrates the diversity of background and diversity of experience of our people – something which we are very proud of. This would be impossible to find if we limited ourselves to one location.

Building this company gives me a purpose when I wake up every morning as I know we are doing something positive for the world. Plenty of people are generating friction and bringing negative energy, and at healthwords.ai we are trying to do the opposite.

How are you funded?

We're funded by a mix of VC money and from the proceeds of the sale of the O.R.S. Hydration Tablets from my other company, Clinova.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

Early on in our journey, we were looking to raise capital from UK VCs but did not feel that the term sheets we were offered would enable us to build the platform we had in mind. It would force us to hand the investors too much control.

We had to re-evaluate our financing strategy which required patience but ultimately helped get us to a position where we could develop the product we envisioned while retaining complete control.

What's in store for the future?

Our aspiration is to become the number one self-care platform in the world, and I think we have a real chance at achieving this when looking at the trends in the industry. Not only do we want to accelerate the rollout across the UK, but we also want to continue to expand into new markets, mainly the US.

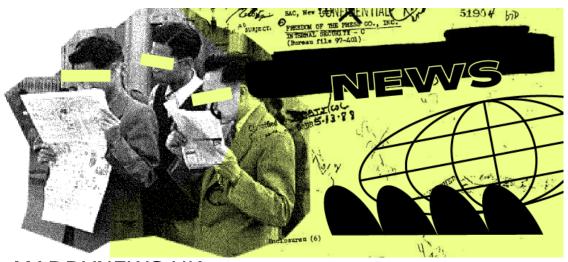# What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

When I look back at my own entrepreneurial journey, it's been far from straightforward, but I realised early on that most things take longer than you expect, especially if you want to do them well and avoid shortcuts. Patience is your best friend, so embrace it instead of rushing!

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

As someone interested in health, I like to experiment with my diet and try new things. I am currently following a modified version of the One Meal a Day (OMAD) eating plan which involves having breakfast and one additional meal, although on weekends I do allow myself three meals a day to enjoy a bit more flexibility.

I also like to try and make my morning commute a time for myself and usually read the Financial Times or listen to a podcast which can often spark ideas for my own projects, plus, it makes the train ride fly by.

Arsalan Karim is the CEO and Co-Founder of _healthwords.ai._

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