

Tampa Bay Times

 WINNER OF 10 PULITZER PRIZES

At Healthbox Tampa, a mission to support 7 startups taking on silos of medical industry



Robert Trigaux, Times Business Columnist

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Who in their right mind would purchase expensive, personal services with minimal information about the provider and little if any idea of the price?

Well, we do that all the time as consumers (or patients) of the health care system.

Efforts to streamline health care and empower consumer decisions with better information are under way. But the task often feels like chipping away at an iceberg with a toothpick.

Time to unleash the entrepreneurs.

Enter Healthbox Tampa.

The newly arrived business accelerator focuses exclusively on nurturing promising health care startups. From 91 applicants across the state, seven promising startups were recently handpicked to join Healthbox. They are participating in a four-month program from space inside the Tampa Bay WaVE business incubator in downtown Tampa until graduation day in late November.

The seven startups will be introduced formally Tuesday at the Mahaffey Theater in downtown St. Petersburg, a salute in part to the regional interest in health care reform.

Like most other startups these days, these seven combine technology advances with their personal health care expertise to find more efficient ways to provide better treatment.



Among the seven are TAOConnect from Gainesville, which says it can make the task of counseling troubled university students more efficient and more successful.

From Tampa, Save On Medical aspires to become the "hotels.com" shopping site for medical procedures.

And from the Fort Myers area, Head Rehab hopes to ride the nation's growing concern over sports concussions with a fresh and mobile way to assess head trauma.

Unlike most other general business accelerators, Healthbox Tampa has strong financial backing from some industry giants, including Florida Blue (part of the BlueCross BlueShield health insurance empire), that are pressing for innovations in a calcified industry.

"This type of investment aligns with Florida Blue's commitment to health care innovation," says Dave Pizzo, West Florida market president for Florida Blue, which has been working with Healthbox since early 2013. "We see this program as an opportunity to bring together currently siloed health care hubs across the state to create one common ecosystem, and this project ties directly to our vision of being a leading innovator enabling healthy communities."

Typically in exchange for a 7 percent equity stake in each startup, Healthbox provides entrepreneurs with \$50,000 of seed capital, office space, a 16-week training program, access to health care experts and the ability to beta test their products.

At one of the seven startups, whose software captures patient data via graphic icons, MediVu CEO Robert Baldwin says it's tough for a young business to reach senior decisionmakers at big hospital chains. Becoming part of the startups backed by Healthbox — an accelerator brand already making its mark in other major cities — has noticeably improved his access, he explains.

What makes Healthbox stand out is its partnerships with key health care providers and payers across the country, says George Gordon, a prominent leader in Tampa Bay's startup scene who chairs Healthbox Tampa.

"This combined with the Healthbox roster of over 350 industry experts can assist the companies in creating relationships with key customers and partners. These relationships are essential to establishing credibility for the companies and accelerating their growth," he says.

Founded by CEO Nina Nashif, Healthbox has grown quickly since launching its first accelerator in Chicago in 2012, expanding to Boston, London, Nashville, Salt Lake City and Florida, where it first landed last year in Jacksonville. Now it's Tampa's turn, where the Florida High Tech Corridor Council, USF, Lake Nona Institute and St. Vincent's Healthcare serve as community sponsors (but not equity investors) for the accelerator.

Combined, the Healthbox accelerators have backed 63 startups, with 61 still in business and growing. Of those, 83 percent are reportedly generating revenue or have successfully raised funding six months after graduation from the program.

That's an impressive track record for startups in an industry notoriously resistant to innovation.

Contact Robert Trigaux at rtrigaux@tampabay.com or (727) 893-8405. Follow @venturetampabay.

At Healthbox

Seven Florida startups out to streamline a slice of health care

BOOKTHATDOC	HEALTH HERO	HEAD REHAB	MEDIVU INC.	PEERFIT	SAVE ON MEDICAL	TAOCONNEX
Free Web-based service helps consumers book doctor appointments online.	Employee wellness solution offers customized, interactive plans that incorporate family and friends.	Medical device and analytical tool for assessing brain performance before and after head trauma.	Intuitive clinical software tool displays patient data as icons on workstations or tablets, increasing retention to understand images faster than text.	Mobile app helps increase consumer access to fitness classes from various gyms and studios by providing flexible, contract-free membership.	Website lets patients shop and pay for affordable health care procedures in their desired location.	Platform of to provides onlin treatment of c mental health problems amc college and un students.
PEOPLE: Matt Bohannon, president and founder; Alex Guastella, CEO	PEOPLE: Anthony Diaz, CEO and founder	PEOPLE: Vera Anderson, CEO and founder; Craig Anderson, COO and founder	PEOPLE: Robert Baldwin, CEO; Glenn Palmierie, vice president, business development	PEOPLE: Ed Buckley, president and founder; Scott Peeples, vice president and founder	PEOPLE: Matt Schneider, founder and president; Chris Christenberry, founder.	PEOPLE: She Benton, presic founder; Stepl George, CEO
BASED: Orlando	BASED: Tampa	BASED: Punta Gorda	BASED: Sarasota/Melbourne	BASED: Gainesville	BASED: Tampa	BASED: Gain
WEBSITE: www.bookthatdoc.com	WEBSITE: www.gohealthhero.com	WEBSITE: www.HeadRehab.com	WEBSITE: www.medivu.com	WEBSITE: www.peerfit.com	WEBSITE: www.saveonmedical.com	WEBSITE: www.TAOConn
STATUS: Good idea but there is competition, so it's all in the execution. Spreading out from Orlando with 15 employees now and expects 40 workers next year. Doctors, charged a monthly fee, will be attracted to it by its online efficiency and increased chance to attract new patients. Customer base so far includes 250 physicians and two hospital systems in Florida.	STATUS: Enthusiastic founder's title on business card? Chief Happy Officer. Pushing into a competitive business persuading companies to pick among employee wellness programs that historically generate weak participation. Diaz stresses programs and apps that make it easy, fun and social, and can include a worker's entire family at no extra cost. Health Hero charges employers \$2-\$3 per family per month. Startup says it has positive cash flow and paying, engaged customers, including a network of seven hospitals in California.	STATUS: Started seven years ago working with military war trauma. Now expanding to sports concussion market. Duo say doctors, researchers and athletic trainers lack an objective, scientifically valid technology to quickly assess brain performance after a concussion. Virtual reality device gauges individual's memory, balance and reactions on a 1-10 scale as baseline at start of a sports season to compare after any potential head injury. Software sold using "per test" or "per month" pricing models directly to athletic programs.	STATUS: Pitches its graphic icons as a more interactive way for health care professionals to monitor patients over time. Hospitals spending billions of dollars on new electronic medical record systems, but doctors and nurses still complain they are not user-friendly and often lack comprehensive patient data. Startup's early version tested in a Brevard County hospital. Software can be priced on the number of licensed hospital beds.	STATUS: Three years ago, four University of Florida students came together with a concept to make group fitness easy and fun. Startup's "SweatPass" membership offers access and guidance to various fitness classes with free gym trials, so far in four major U.S. cities (including Orlando) with Atlanta on the way. In turn, gyms gain new member leads and cross-gym partnerships. A pilot test was launched of its multi-gym pass in Houston and a pilot test of the lead generation model is scheduled for Tampa.	STATUS: "We are the hotels.com for medical procedures," Christenberry says. With patients price-sensitive to health care costs due to high-deductible plans, online marketplaces can help patients shop for procedures based upon price, quality and location. Providers pay a subscription fee to be listed on the Save on Medical site. The subscription model is based on how many appointments medical providers schedule each month. It sounds like the Holy Grail of medical consumer shopping — if the startup can find enough worthy providers to make public their prices and provide competitive choices. Startup says it includes procedures from about 25 percent of country's radiology facilities and soon will launch data on outpatient surgical clinics.	STATUS: It's : University of I related startu one founded a by two womer versed in stud counseling an startup manag Startup says it mental health can allow a co center to treat times the num students per counselor hou than half the p student cost a better outcom face-to-face traditional the Counseling ce: pay an annual subscription fi on the total enrollment at college or univ Twelve college universities, n Tampa Bay ar Florida school beta test servi fall for a disco price. Ten uni say they will p TAOConnect v available this January.

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Based: Orlando	Based: Tampa	Based: Punta Gorda, Fla.	Based: Sarasota/Melbourne, Fla.	Based: Gainesville, Fla	Based: Tampa	Based: Gaines Fla.
Website: www.bookthatdoc.com	Website: www.gohealthhero.com	Website: www.HeadRehab.com	Website: www.medivu.com	Website: www.peerfit.com	Website: www.saveonmedical.com	Website: www.TAOCor
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