

Redefining Healthcare: The Saathealth Story

Saathealth is an AI-powered, personal health platform that is bringing a novel approach to healthcare. In the most recent episode of the Hub Innovation Series, Ebele Anidi, the Hub's Director of Partnerships and Engagements, sat down with Saathealth's co-founders, Dr. Akash Ganju and Aditi Hazra-Ganju, to understand how they apply an innovative approach to health behavior change and tailored service delivery in the health system landscape.



The conversation introduced Saathealth as one of the PATH Primary Healthcare Tech Challenge winners. CEO, Akash Ganju, described Saathealth's inception as a blend of healthcare expertise and technological acumen, with both co-founders having over 25 years in the healthcare industry collectively. Saathealth is a response to the need for more demand-side innovation in global healthcare delivery specifically through preventive health education and demand generation. The platform leverages digital technology to reach health consumers, widening healthcare engagement among underrepresented population groups while also being cost-effective.



Aditi Hazra-Ganju highlighted Saathealth's unique approach to influencing behavioral change — an omni-channel strategy that seamlessly integrates mobile and web apps, social media, and even chatbots. Aditi explained that it's about meeting users in their digital comfort zones and creating awareness for tailored health products and services. This

journey, underpinned by real-time analytics and cutting-edge AI, nudges users toward healthier lifestyles and proactive health decisions.

Part of innovating is the ability to recognize and overcome challenges. The founders discussed their struggle to articulate the platform's unique, geography-agnostic position, the hurdle of aligning with healthcare delivery partners that share their vision – a balance of business acumen with a social impact mindset. They also noted that one of the key enablers to their success has been the ability to cultivate and grow a multidisciplinary team.

Saathhealth's major aspiration is to advocate for a paradigm shift towards demand-side healthcare innovation. The founders articulated the need for empowering individuals to navigate their health journeys with confidence and knowledge.

To learn more about Saathhealth's journey and impact, the [full episode](#) is available on YouTube.

Watch the full interview [here](#)

Visit Saathhealth's [website](#) for further details and insights.

Interview Transcript

Ebele Anidi: Today's session will focus on Saathealth, the AI powered personalized digital Health platform. My name is Ebele Anidi. I'm the director of partnerships and engagements for [the G20 Global Innovation Hub for Improving Value in Health](#). The Hub Innovation Series aims to foster and support innovation across the G20 member states by spotlighting the innovative practical and impactful solutions from inspirational health pioneers from around the world. The folks who are at the forefront of working to usher in a new era of high value health systems. Today, through a partnership with PATH, the Hub is excited to welcome the wonderful team from Saathealth, an impactful AI powered platform for personalized digital Health. Saathealth was actually a recent winner of the PATH Primary Healthcare Tech Challenge. Dr Akash Ganju and Aditi Hazra-Ganju are joining us today to share the Saathealth story, a platform that has already engaged more than 30 million people from across southeast and central Asia. Let's kick things off with you Akash, this AI driven Omni channel platform is such a unique idea. It's such an incredibly innovative solution. Can you share the origins of Saathealth. When we think about the innovation cycle, can you walk us through that journey for Saathealth from ideation to collaboration to implementation and then ultimately the value creation?

Akash Ganju: Yes, thank you very much for this opportunity. I will cover the origin of Saathealth in three sections, I'll speak about why we do what we do, what is the purpose of our existence and what it is that we exactly do and then I'll talk about how we go about reaching and empowering millions around the world with personalized digital Health. The purpose of our existence and why we do it is really an intersection of our personal and our professional Journeys as well as what's happening in the macro environment around us. Both Aditi and I have worked in healthcare for close to 25 years. We started our careers working in the private sector and then for the last 14 years we worked at the intersection of public health technology and consumer empowerment. About 14 years back we started working on building digital platforms for HIV patients across rural India and then we did a lot of work with building digital platforms for maternal and child health in multiple countries around the world. Both of these deep immersive experiences convinced us that healthcare consumers or beneficiaries are increasingly ready to be at the table they don't want to be told. They want to participate in their own healthcare journey and that was a very important insight for us that led to the inception of Saathealth. While we were learning about health consumers and how they are increasingly taking charge of their own health we also realized that many organizations around the world needed new agile tools to reach and make an impact on their health consumers. We realized that there's a massive imbalance in demand and supply around the world. The demand for healthcare is rising rapidly in many countries, in most countries around the world the supply is extremely limited. We don't have enough healthcare workers doctors or nurses to address the booming demand and that's leading to massive increase in cost. This is rising higher than inflation in most countries around the

world and there is a need to start looking at innovative business models. Our thesis is that health consumers need to be empowered to start investing in their own preventive health and health systems need to take charge and start doing more preventive health interventions with health consumers.

Now, I'll talk about what it is that we do. We are a preventive health education awareness and demand generation platform. Our focus is to reach consumers and beneficiaries wherever they are, in local languages, with preventive health content. We generate awareness, educate them and then guide them towards products and services with supply side partners we work with. There are great supply side innovations but there is a need for a focus on the consumer side. How do you reach them where they are? How do you engage them? How do you really guide them to start taking charge of their own health? How we reach these consumers is really dependent on where they are. We use both online and offline tools to reach them. We do have to acknowledge that the digital revolution in the last 10 years especially has made it much easier to reach health consumers and beneficiaries. So, when we think about reaching consumers and beneficiaries where they are I think our approach is digital first. There are three advantages to thinking of digital first, demand side interventions. The first is the cost of reaching and acquiring beneficiaries or health consumers is much lower than in traditional models of healthcare delivery. The second is just using digital platforms allows you to understand user insights on a real-time basis and continue to innovate and iterate on the solutions that you're providing these health consumers. Finally, health systems now have access to high frequency health consumer data. It allows them to look at what's happening with the health consumer what their needs are and implement real-time innovations. Think of the massive impact this could have when the next pandemic happens right. Our approach is to think about digital first health innovations. We're also beginning to use AI to target users with products and services. We already have four peer reviewed publications in this space, and we are super excited about the impact that AI can have on really targeting consumers with what they need in terms of interventions and preventive health products and services. In a nutshell, **if you are a health system that's looking to reach health consumers at scale, engage them, increase awareness and then guide them towards your products and services, we want to be talking to you. We want to see if we can help you achieve your health goals.**

Ebele Anidi: Aditi, I would really love to hear you speak to the unique Saathhealth approach for catalyzing behavior change. Then on the back end as we as we leverage this time together to reflect on your journey to date. Maybe you could speak to some of the challenges as well as the enablers that have really shaped the Saathhealth journey to date

Aditi Hazra-Ganju: Let me begin by going a little bit more into detail. Akash talked a lot about how we engage with the end user and how we take a very user centric approach to delivering healthcare information, as well as influencing health seeking behaviors. I wanted to spend a

little bit of time talking a little more in detail about how we do this. Over the years Saathhealth evolved, we learned that it wasn't sufficient to just build a digital health platform and expect users to come to it and use it the way we wanted them to. It made more sense to reach out and meet the users where they are. We wanted to give them the information through channels that they used to and accessing regularly make healthcare information and awareness a part of their natural digital appetite. We take it to them wherever they are and with this realization we started developing what we call an omni channel approach. We don't only use a particular mobile application, but we use various aspects like a mobile app, a web app, and we use social media extensively. We use YouTube channels; we use even now more and more WhatsApp and messenger chat Bots. That's where the users are. **Once we have reached the users through these Omni channel platforms we get them into a common gamified learning journey, which takes them through a step-by-step process, giving them behavior change communication in the language that they understand and in the way that they understand.** For example, in India what works great for us is taking a very Bollywood type of approach and really engaging the users in a way that they don't find Health content depressing or tiring. They find it more uplifting and aspirational so that's been our content and engagement approach. Once we have them going through this entire gamified journey, we are able to nudge them towards behavioral changes that we need. It could be redirecting them towards certain types of health products and services or leading them into lead generation campaigns that we are running. At the same time, we're able to see through the real-time analytics that we're tracking the knowledge shift the behavioral changes that they're displaying as well as get deeper insights into how users behave on digital platforms. All of this using our AI algorithms and using constant iterative awareness and so on. That's how we are able to take all the users through this journey and get them to towards health-seeking behaviors.

Now I can talk a little bit about what has been challenging for us as founders of Saathhealth. One of the main challenges that we've faced has been to explain our positioning. Now that you have a little bit of background about what we do I'm sure you understand that we are an organization that can engage users and then nudge them towards healthcare products and services irrespective of which geography they're in, or what therapeutic area. This geography and therapy area agnostic platform is a little difficult to explain because most people are used to platforms that can maybe cure diabetes or provide a solution to lose weight or provide a solution that can help mental health. People tend to not understand a horizontal approach, where the journey is the same irrespective of whether you're suffering from mental illness or you're just looking for preventive health for your entire family. This unique positioning where we are able to support health organizations reach any user irrespective of what it is that is bothering them. What we find very difficult to explain and that's I think been one of our biggest challenges. However, I think we've now reached a point where we are clearer about what we have to offer. We are able to articulate our positioning

a lot better. Thanks to platforms like this we're able to bring it out and talk about what we do much better. That's been that's been a great help.

The second challenge that we faced has been that we've been very clear that our expertise is better user solutions and that is what we are good at. At the same time, we need to complete the care continuum by partnering with likeminded partners on the supply side or the delivery side of healthcare. It could be health systems, hospitals, people who provide pharmacy services or telehealth services. This process is not as easy as people think. You need to make sure that your partners are like-minded, they have the same alignment as you and that they're impact driven like. This has been a major challenge for us to circumvent. I think the third and the most personal challenge for both Akash and me are that we've both been very passionate about building an impact-focused enterprise. We want to balance impact with our business goals and that as you can imagine is easier said than done. We've tried very hard in the last five years to integrate this impact focus into the core offering of our work and that's been the most exciting challenge to tackle in in this entire journey of building Saathhealth. We've been able to do this with some fantastic support from people and one of the reasons why we were able to expand and experiment so effectively was with the help of grant support that we received from some very forward thinking, impact-focused organizations. That's been a key enabler for us to get to where it is today. Another thing that has worked very well in our favor has been our focus on building a multidisciplinary team. We've combined expertise in healthcare with expertise in data sciences, with expertise in technology and external communications. It's all come together very beautifully to deliver the goals of what Saathhealth is trying to achieve - that is reach the users where they are with informational content to get them to display behavior change and to be able to track and nudge them towards uptake of healthcare services and products. I think that summarizes where we are today with the challenges we have faced and the enablers that have helped us along on this journey.

Ebele Anidi: I think you laid out in a very honest and helpful way that you and Akash have set a very ambitious vision for Saathhealth, and your mission is focused on a new landscape in which people feel empowered and well informed to dictate and navigate their own personalized Health Journeys. For us at the Hub and the audience tuning in today it's really helpful to hear how you've actually turned those challenges into opportunities. How have you benefited from a growing Coalition of supporters as well as leaning on, as you described a really strong and multifaceted, multidisciplinary team? One of the Global Innovation Hub's main responsibilities is really elevating and spotlighting Innovations for our membership which includes representation from across the G20 plus Nations. As we think about invested stakeholders from across the G20 plus countries, what are your aspirations for the future of Saathhealth?

Akash Ganju: Our aspirations for the future of Saathhealth are also linked very closely with our aspirations for global health around the world . I think that's really important to us . One of the things that I would say to the G20 Nations is there's great work happening on the supply side great Innovations but how do you make sure that you reduce the cost of getting those Innovations to people in far-flung parts of your country? How do you make sure that you create this pull for people to come and ask for these Innovations? One of the calls for action that we would really encourage everybody to think about is think more about demand side Innovation. We are one of the players on the demand side. I'm sure there are other ones as well but it's really important. **Consumers are hungry, they want to be part of this journey. They no longer want to be told what they should be doing in healthcare.** One call to action and that that aligns very well with Saathhealth's own aspirations is for us to track our impact and our business goals. This is a graphic that shows you how we track our social impact on a monthly basis. We worked across multiple indicators, multiple geographies, multiple languages and we've reached more than 50 million people now and engaged over a million people while having generated health actions/health-seeking behaviors in excess of 100,000. Let me take two instances of how this graphic comes together for us; one of the things that we're working on is this massive program to increase financial literacy around health products and services. With the missing middle 500 million population in India, we launched an initiative aimed at reaching people in the millions every month in local language. We are engaging with them, and we are guiding them towards services from our supply side partners. I'm talking about telehealth services, medical device services, Insurance products and so many more that are designed for the wallets of these of these consumers. One really good concrete example of how the entire journey works is illustrated by the work that we are doing in Central Asia with the ministries of education and health. We are reaching out to children and adolescent youth around the theme of emotional resilience and mental health, which is a hugely important subject. By this time next year, we expect to reach millions of young children and adolescents, engaging them with preventive health content and helping guide them towards products and services. My biggest call to action would be think about demand side Innovation because we cannot continue to do business the way we've done it in the last 50 years. We need new innovative models. We are extremely proud of what we've done in the five years but there is a long way to go and our aspirations for Saathhealth are really aligned with the UN SDGS and the aspirations of global health for everybody .

Ebele Anidi: if you're interested you can look up Saathhealth's work via our respective websites, join our LinkedIn Pages, follow us on Twitter.