

Interview: Mridula Pore, CEO of Peppy Health

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Recently, I had the chance to catch up with Mridula Pore, CEO of Peppy Health and we spoke about the real cost of lost human capital at work and beyond, the future of insurance that employers provide their teams with and everything in between.

What does Peppy Health do? Peppy health gives employers a new range of employee's benefits that have a huge impact on staff attraction, productivity and loyalty — benefits that people want. Their products support new parents and women dealing with the challenges of menopause, with more in the pipeline. Peppy Health was born out of the desire to support people during these challenging times and Mridula, during our chat, shared her views with me during our conversation, which we've transcribed below.

Carlos. When I first met you, and before we invested in Peppy Health, I remember you telling me that there are two or three major points in someone's life that can fundamentally change their outlook, the economic opportunities

open to them, and their wellbeing. For our readers, what are those points?

Mridula. Three obvious ones are going through fertility treatment, becoming a parent and going through the menopause. Anything that causes somebody to sit back and re-evaluate their working life — hours, location, the kind of career or career track they want. There are more than you think, and typically less to do with what's happening at work and more about what's happening in your personal life. In their ways, each of these events changes you and often you need extra support. The question is what happens at these inflexion points? You might be lucky enough to get the right support at the right time. But the reality is that all too often you're left on your own and your physical, mental and emotional health can spiral downwards, affecting your decisions about work.

Carlos. So what's interesting is that, to date, a lot of this was dealt with privately, right? Why are employers starting to care now?

Mridula. Historically, yes, these were considered 'private' matters for the individual to deal with. But we now have an ageing population, smaller families and all forms of public healthcare are stretched to the max. The result is that people feel isolated and unsupported when they go through these transitions, while still working in demanding jobs. Supporting them just makes good business sense. The bulk of the life transitions that we're talking about aren't covered by private medical insurance, employee's assistance programmes nor occupational health. There's a gaping void — which we conservatively value at £6billion in the U.K. alone — and women are penalised disproportionately, resulting in absence, attrition and ultimately the gender pay gap.

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Carlos. So if the government and existing benefits' providers don't give much support, what do employees do now?

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Mridula. It isn't. And on top of this, we're all working for longer, so as you said earlier, it all comes down to the cost of human capital for employers. Take the

menopause as an example, in 1900 a woman would typically go through it at 45 and yet back then life expectancy was only 50 or 60. Whereas today a British woman typically goes through the menopause at 51 and lives until 88 on average. She can expect to be working for at least another decade, maybe two. Suddenly this becomes a workplace issue and we need support like never before. We have a war for talent right now, across a whole range of skills. This is true whether employees are data scientists or nurses. If you're not able to support and retain them, then you lose access to a huge chunk of your critical workforce capacity. Or consider housekeeping staff at a hotel chain. We're in a particular situation right now in the U.K., where employers cannot attract and retain that workforce from the E.U., leaving a big gap. Even losing one person can be hugely disruptive and costly. You can easily incur costs up to 12 months of salary by the time that person had time off or decided to leave, you advertise, fill the position, and train the next person up.

Carlos. And you lose the technical and relational expertise these people bring, which is tricky, right? Ultimately, it comes down to managing people and when key people leave you, your organisation ends up in flux. Now when it comes to the services specifically, maybe you can walk us through what services are required? If now's the time for employers to engage, what services are necessary to engage?

Mridula. Before becoming a parent for the first time or going through menopause, most people don't think much of the realities of life on the other side of this transition. There are lots of taboos around these topics (for example, postnatal depression in dads), so first of all, there's a need for trusted information. Secondly, people want reassurance on what is and isn't normal. Should I be worried that my newborn baby only sleeps two hours at a stretch? Will this eventually pass? You don't feel like yourself, there's something not quite right, but you don't know what it is. Thirdly, there's a huge need for signposting you towards your options: "What you're describing is X and therefore you can try Y or speak to your GP about Z." Put simply, Peppy Health is like having an expert best friend on hand to answer any questions the person may have, to be directed to trustworthy sources of information and to be connected to specialist practitioners — a lactation consultant, a menopause nurse, a fertility specialist, etc. Chat is the backbone of our services: direct access to a certified expert who understands what you're going through. Our users are busy and they love the convenience it offers. It's how they communicate with their friends. Our experts also understand what issues might be coming up and can help people prepare for them. Right now our weekly average user rate is 80%. This compares to <1% for conventional products.

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Carlos. What do you think will be the biggest HR challenges for organisations in the next five years?

Mridula. Fortunately for us, the answer to that is 100% clear: get 'inclusion' right in its broadest sense. We've spoken to hundreds of people and

professionals and everyone is struggling to work out how to attract and retain the best employees as the expectations of the workforce shift dramatically. Talent of all ages, different backgrounds, gender and abilities is more valuable to employers than ever before.

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If you’d like to learn more about Peppy Health, get in touch with them [here](#) — or [via their website](#).

This article originally appeared on Carlo Eduardo Espinal’s blog, which you can read [here](#).

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Evan (co-founder) and Mridula (co-founder) from Peppy Health

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Carlos. Thanks, Mridula. You've certainly given me lots to think about. All of this ties into big investment themes like the future of work and women's health. Considering the size of the opportunity it's still an untapped space. I'm excited to see Peppy continue to grow.

Mridula. Thanks, Carlos. It's been great talking to you.

If you'd like to learn more about Peppy, feel free to get in touch with them [here](#) — or [via their website](#).