

Meet Patchwork Health, the comprehensive, tech- enabled workforce solution for healthcare organisations

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Dr Anas Nader and Dr Jing Ouyang, cofounders of Patchwork Health about training as doctors at Imperial College, their solution that makes flexible working a reality for all clinicians and navigating the nuances of different healthcare organisation.

We first met while both training as doctors at Imperial College, London. On the hospital floor, we later witnessed first-hand the significant impact that long hours, rigid rostering systems, and growing workforce pressures were placing on ourselves and our colleagues. Budget and resource limitations were also making it increasingly challenging for managers to plug gaps and staff wards sustainably. We knew something needed to change.

We founded Patchwork Health in 2016 to build a comprehensive, tech-enabled workforce solution. As *global workforce shortages worsen*, and the NHS *faces its worst staffing crisis in history*, we're working with healthcare organisations to deliver a solution that makes flexible working a reality for all clinicians whilst

also supporting employers to make healthcare staffing more sustainable.

Tell me about Patchwork Health

Patchwork's mission is to boost retention across the healthcare workforce and support clinicians in their careers, with maximum flexibility and wellbeing a core focus. We do this by working in close collaboration with healthcare organisations to build products which make staffing more flexible, efficient and cost-effective. These include:

Staff banks, which enable approved temporary workers to safely book onto shifts which can't be filled by permanent staff via a user-friendly app. This makes it easier for them to choose when and where they work, while saving organisations money by reducing the over-reliance on external agencies.

Collaborative staff banks, which allow organisations to create shared networks of temporary workers, enabling staff to work across different hospitals and locations, and be deployed to areas with highest patient demand.

Rostering software for permanent staff, which allows their individual preferences to be factored into their rota, while giving managers greater oversight of long-term workforce planning.

Our Insights platform, which provides managers with access to a wealth of workforce data to help organisations identify staffing trends, predict future rota gaps, and reliably plan ahead.

Our Agency Manager platform, which makes it easier for managers to source temporary staff from external agencies when necessary to plug additional staffing gaps.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

Since our launch in 2016, we've partnered with over 100+ healthcare sites to provide tailored workforce solutions and make flexible working a reality for over 40,000 clinicians. So far, we've helped save the NHS an estimated £40M and have enabled 3 million hours of shifts to be sustainably staffed each year.

Our team has also grown; we're now a team of more than 100, made up of current and former healthcare staff who are all passionate about supporting clinicians to access more flexible and sustainable careers.

How are you funded?

We've raised £30M to date through our fantastic VCs and Angels. This includes our recently announced £20M Series B round, which was led by *Perwyn*, backed by *Praetura Ventures* and *KHP Ventures*, and joined by a number of prominent Angels, including Monzo Founder *Tom Blomfield* and Social Chain cofounder Dominic McGregor.

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

By far the biggest challenge when launching any healthtech solution is that, of course, every healthcare organisation works in different ways. There is a great deal of nuance to consider if a solution is to truly work for the individual clinicians you're trying to help. What are their various processes like? Which other digital systems are they already using? What unique challenges are they facing?

That's why, from the very beginning, we have prioritised working in close partnership with each of our healthcare partners to understand the specific needs of their workforce before, during and after developing a solution. This ongoing collaboration allows us to pinpoint specific pain points and then tailor each solution to ensure they are addressed.

How does Patchwork Health answer an unmet need?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is predicting a global shortfall of 15 million healthcare staff by 2030. Within the NHS alone, more than one-fifth (22.9%) of staff are considering leaving within the next 12 months. It's clear that a solution is desperately needed to boost retention by providing staff with greater flexibility, choice and support.

That's where we come in. By supporting managers to more easily plan staffing around patient outcomes, and give workers greater flexibility in when and where they work, we're turning the tide on rigid healthcare careers. Greater work-life balance, more reliable staffing and access to a wider range of professional opportunities are essential to supporting staff to remain in their roles, and stem the rising shortages.

What's in store for the future?

Following our latest funding round, we're furthering our mission to support an even wider number of organisations across the UK and beyond. We're excited to begin helping an increasing number of clinicians access flexible working opportunities and support managers to deliver more sustainable staffing.

With our existing partners, we'll continue to work closely to optimise each workforce solution and help them adapt to changing demand. As the NHS moves towards more collaborative working, we'll also be supporting them to build workforce solutions which reflect this – enabling both temporary and permanent staff to be deployed safely across different departments and locations, based on their specific skill sets and patient need.

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

Communication is everything. Successful healthcare innovation revolves around collaboration and close partnership with your end users. Provide frequent opportunities for clinicians and managers to share feedback, discuss the specific pain points they are facing and allow them to contribute to the overall product design.

Post-implementation, ensure you're on-hand to support workers across the entire organisation through onboarding and beyond. Healthcare staff have so many demands on their time, so making the adoption of new technology as seamless and stress-free as possible is crucial. At Patchwork, we offer ongoing technical support to all our partners, and are always looking for new ways to adapt and evolve our solution to ensure it is fully optimised for users.

Dr Anas Nader and Dr Jing Ouyang are cofounders of *Patchwork Health*.

