

Effective communication for clinicians and the best outcomes for patients, meet Cinapsis

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Dr Owain Rhys Hughes, founder and CEO of Cinapsis about reducing patient waiting lists with streamlined and effective communication, working with NHS Trusts and understanding pain points.

From my own experience as an Ear, Nose and Throat surgeon working in the NHS, I've witnessed the frustration and delays caused by prohibitive, outdated and inefficient tech. Hours can be eaten up navigating convoluted email chains or waiting for information to be sent back and forth between primary and secondary care. Too often, this siloed communication meant I'd end up seeing a patient in my clinic who didn't really need to be there in the first place.

I decided to build a solution. Clinicians needed more streamlined, effective communication channels through which information and advice could be more easily shared. So I founded Cinapsis to make clinical communication simpler and more efficient, helping clinicians across primary and secondary care to work together more effectively to achieve the best outcomes for patients.

Tell me about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

Cinapsis is a digital platform through which clinicians can request and share specialist advice and high-quality clinical imagery in real-time. A specialist can review the case remotely and advise on whether a referral to outpatient care or A&E is necessary. When it's not, the patient can instead be triaged to an appropriate service or treatment within the community. This helps to reduce the number of people joining waiting lists unnecessarily and speeds up access to care for those who need it.

We work with clinicians across 15 Integrated Care Systems in England, covering a population of 8 million patients, supporting the clinicians to access timely advice and guidance and collaborate effectively on care.

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

Since our launch in 2018, we have partnered with a number of major NHS Trusts, ICSs and CCGs, across a range of clinical specialties. In Cheshire and Merseyside, we helped launch a teledermatology project which has eliminated the 30% of unnecessary referrals being made to the cancer-suspected two-week wait pathway and saved an estimated £1M a year for the Trust.

Meanwhile, in Norfolk and Waveney, use of Cinapsis has helped to cut wait times for specialist advice from 50 weeks to just 48 hours.

Tell us about the working culture at Cinapsis

Everyone at Cinapsis is committed to the same mission: supporting clinicians across the NHS to communicate and collaborate more easily on care. We work very collaboratively ourselves to achieve this, both within our own team and with our NHS partners. This means spending a great deal of time working closely with clinicians on the ground to understand the specific needs and pain points they are facing. Then, by pooling our shared skills and expertise we're able to build a solution that is tailored to really solve these.

Mental wellbeing is also a big priority. As a fully remote team, we're continuously looking for new ways to support our colleagues; whether that's by introducing new platforms, resources or tools. Most recently we began offering team members sessions with Sanctus, the UK's first mental health gym.

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

For healthcare teams who are facing extensive challenges and pressures post pandemic, very often the last thing they want to do is begin using yet another digital tool. What they need is technology that can be easily adopted into their existing workloads and processes, and the support to get to grips with it quickly.

To ensure our technology is always supporting and never adding a burden to clinicians, we've made onboarding a big priority. This means working closely with clinicians throughout the product implementation and beyond to provide guidance and support with switching to a new system.

How does Cinapsis answer an unmet need?

With an ever-growing waiting list for elective care, and a workforce crisis threatening a mass exodus of staff, support is desperately needed to help clinicians work together more easily, and meet rising patient demand while avoiding the risk of burnout.

At Cinapsis, we're opening up faster, more direct channels of communication enabling greater collaboration between different services. By allowing clinicians to share real-time advice and guidance at the touch of a button, we're helping reduce admin burden, speed up referrals and reduce the number of patients joining waiting lists in the first place. This, in turn, is helping boost staff retention by freeing up time and capacity and easing the pressures they are facing.

What's in store for the future?

As a team, we're really excited to continue working alongside our NHS partners to build on and expand the services we're helping deliver. We're always looking for new ways to improve and update our platform and ensure it caters to users' specific needs.

Alongside this, we're integrating with a number of healthcare IT and digital systems to make it even easier for clinicians to share and access vital information. As we begin to roll out a number of exciting new projects over the coming months, our team is also set to continue growing.

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

Don't overlook the nuances of the problem you're trying to solve. Especially in healthcare, every organisation, department and team will work in a different way and have different, particular needs. Spend time speaking to clinicians on the frontline to find out what these are and make sure you truly understand the unique pain points they are facing.

Having this nuanced understanding will help you tailor your product to ensure it meets these needs and genuinely answers the issue. It's absolutely key to providing a genuine, successful solution.

Dr Owain Rhys Hughes is founder and CEO of [Cinapsis](#).

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