How HRT Turned A Patient Into A CEO Transcript

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Introduction to the healthcare system

But I definitely feel like the system has become efficient at making people sick and making money off of people that are sick. The system currently no longer wants you to be healthy.

They want you to be fit sick. The insurance companies should make more money when you're healthy. That's not the way it works. They make more money when you're sick.

The brick and mortar investments that have been made by these hospital systems only work if there's people in them. So if you start addressing the core issue, why people are showing up to these hospitals and why people are going in for care and the pharmaceutical companies, a long time ago, they stopped making medications that you could take.

And it cures you. They they only work. I don't want to say only, but they primarily work on medications that you have to take every day. Yeah. It's that makes sense from a business standpoint, because if you take their medication every day, you're going to be on it.

The you're a customer for life. This is doctor talks real talk from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most. Welcome to Proactive Healthcare with Excel Medical.

Craig Larsen's path into Excel Medical

I am Leif Wombwell and I'm joined here by Craig Larsen, who is my business partner, co-founder and the CEO of Excel Medical. So thanks for being here, Craig.

Thank you. And, in the previous time I'd asked you about how you personally got into HRT and you told us the story of how it affected you and some of your friends.

How did it start going from there into a business? How did you get involved in that aspect of it? Well, it's pretty interesting because, people ask me like, you know, what do you do?

Yeah. And I have in the past just said, well, I guess I'm a serial entrepreneur. So back back in my career, I've, you know, I started out as an accountant, Ernst and Young, and then I owned, my own business doing, some technology software company.

Okay. Ended up owning a bank. Ended up working in a furniture company. So I've. I worked at all these different industries, and, and at the time, I was working on the furniture company, and I was seeing data for Tino's.

And he had a business partner back then. His name was Don Nicholas. And Don had approached me because he knew I was. I did a good job at running companies to come help run to.

Okay. And you know, with him. And so that was our game plan. And, what was the goal to was it to expand? It was it was to expand it in Don's vision at that point, was Revi to 100.

So he wanted he wanted to have 100 offices across the country. Okay. And so I started negotiating with him at, you know, by 50% of the clinic. And, it was a tragic surfing accident, and he passed away.

And so things changed at that point, and I ended up buying 100% of the clinic. Okay. And then, of course, started for tennis. Was a partner as well. And, we my whole vision was to really expand it very much like Don had envisioned it.

I had a little different slant to it, because I had come from the.com world of at scale seeing things scale. And so I was not a big fan of just having 100 brick and mortar offices.

I wanted to do, you know, try to figure out some way to do it differently. And I tried over and over on different ways to do that. And, ultimately, the, you know, the math never really worked out to where it was more more like a digital type company that I was used to in the software world.

And so I started pulling back a little bit. And that's when I met you. And, I have to just. I gotta tell how we met, because it is. It's. I love the story of where we met on Lake Norman.

And, I hear people, you know, this cool guy looking super jacked. Everyone's trying to figure out who he is. And everyone goes, oh, that's Doctor Craig.

And I'm like, what? Like, is he a doctor? Like, no, really. He sells. He sells a potion that makes you young. That is exactly what I was taught. So somehow you you become a bit of a legend on the lake for this youth potion.

And then I've ever had telling me it was hormones. And I had absolutely no clue what that meant at that time. Right. But you would. I guess you would.

You owned provider at that point, right? Correct. Yes, yes. And you were working on expanding it and so on. And the, the issue in really every business of I always been associated with the issue is always the top line.

Yeah. Right. You can always figure out the rest of the business as long as you got the top line. Yeah. At sold at the right price obviously. But but my issue was the, the sales and marketing side.

And that's when you and I started talking coke and, Yeah, obviously I know this part, but I'm in a for your guys sake out there. I'm going to ask anyway.

So, said, tell me what happened next. So you and I started talking, and, when you heard my background as being the youth doctor, when asked what yours was, it was digital marketing, and you were used to funnels and bringing large amount of people through different sales funnels and getting them to convert into clients and customers and things like that.

From brick-and-mortar clinics to telemedicine

And so I'm like, man, that's that's the part I need the most help with, you know, can you can you they, you think we can do something together? Yeah. And that's when you and I started talking.

You actually, you know, you did what any good marketing person would do. You you came in and you sat in the office and you took phone calls and you learned about it. You. Yeah.

You helped try to expand it through. Went on to the program, went on the program. But you even like we're trying to figure out how to grow it through, you know, cars and you know, with the little caravans that you did you remember those?

Of course, different things like that. And that's when you and I started going, look, there's got to be a more scalable way. And so my background of scaling was digital.

Yeah. I'm the standpoint that that whole.com world, your your background is digital. So that's when we said, well let's go to telemedicine. And when we started in telemedicine, the first, you know, hurdle we had for hormones is it's a controlled substance.

And back in 2018 you weren't allowed to prescribe testosterone via telemedicine. So that put the halt on that. And then we said, well, let's try something like Ed.

And we actually didn't start right away with Ed. We started with a really quality supplement that we had an idea, and we tested the market that way and learned quite a bit about it.

And then, these products started getting off patent. We were using a compounded Ed formulation back then, and we started in North Carolina selling a digital kind of a Hims and Roman version of this way before hims and Roman.

Yeah. And so we were pioneer in that industry as well. That is true. And, and the plan was always to go to HRT because with low energy difficulty focusing, it might not just be stress, it could be low testosterone and male excel.

We specialize in personalized testosterone replacement therapy with daily dosing, progress monitoring, and a dedicated care team to ensure your plan stays effective.

Within six months, 96% of our patients report life changing results, and with our 90 day Excel Advantage guarantee, you got nothing to lose. Feel stronger, healthier, and more energized with Excel.

Yeah. The plan. We always wanted to figure that out and I don't know if you remember, but it was we were on a, planning trip where you did a photo shoot.

We are already doing, all 50 states for Ed at that time. And it just, you know, hit us like a two by four in the head where it's like, okay, we got it.

The way in which to scale this would be basically mimic the telemedicine model with an initial visit up front. Right. And and so we started doing hormone replacement in seven locations in, North Carolina and in Florida.

And so we had physical locations back then, and then Covid hit and shut everything down. So it's safe to say that you, you were the first or we were the first.

Technically, we were the first. And not until that waiver came out, because when we first started, we were just like every other brick and mortar. But then when that waiver came out.

So Covid hit, shut everything down. Yeah. And then, there was the DEA published a waiver allowing telemedicine for controlled substances because people weren't able to get to their providers at that point.

And as soon as that hit, we already had 50 state network of providers. The really that same week we were selling in all 50 states or it went crazy. Yeah, we had to slow it down.

That was see, that's how it's very comfortable to say that we were the first telemedicine hormone provider in the country. Very cool. So then tell me from from that position, I mean, gosh, when we started, guys, you would not believe the stuff that we went for from getting people on iPhones and faxing prescriptions.

And I would call and sell people and you would answer customer care. And, my brother joined us to try and get credit cards when they were not working.

It was a it was a real homemade operation. Yeah. So tell me, tell me how that transition's been to where it is now. Like, what would have how would you describe the biggest changes?

Well, it's been a typical startup, you know, bootstrapped startup. Yep.

Scaling during COVID and early startup growth

When we did start the, ed version of the company, yeah, we did start with an investment. And so that that investor still with us today, he's been great.

And, so that gave us the capital to have be in all 50 states building. Make sure you remember that legal bill that we had that all did, massive. And then we looked like crazy to get, computer system for the providers and, digital

system for an EMR.

To essentially scale the business. And we were just one of the first telemedicine companies out there, and certainly the first telemedicine hormone provider.

It didn't exist. So we had that. We had to invest in our own, which has been a big advantage for us now. But all the starring pains at a normal, you know, startup.

What have we had? You know, plus a whole new industry. And if you remember, Covid was going on and people didn't want to come to our office. We were growing like crazy that, you know, it really only made it an advantage for us to be in the office and to communicate more.

So we made those decisions, too. We started in the back room of of the med spa that, that I owned, and then we moved from that one room to two rooms over at the Hormone Clinic, outgrew that, and went to one of my favorites.

We had two rooms in the back of his in docked but for stenosis hormone clinic. And we hired, I think, eight people straight out of college. Yeah, in the middle.

And there was, there was probably 14 of us coming in every single day, jamming in the coffee break through power probably didn't meet fire code for us to keep going.

Yeah. So from that location, then we got the location that we thought we'd be in for five years. If you remember, we we ended up buying that building, and in Mooresville and, we outgrew that.

And 12 months. Yeah. And, then we had to go. Well, tell me, tell us what it is now. Well, it started as a church and, of course, all our favorite stories from the church is the pastor was buried there, and, we were very flexible when we moved in to tell the the, the widow that, you know, we could exhume the body.

After that, we moved in and she called me up and was like, you know, you guys have been so nice. And I appreciate everything, but do you mind if we keep the body there?

And, and as much as I would have liked to if, we'd said no, that wouldn't probably be the best. I think one of my favorite memories in the early days is, having all of our staff wondering what it was.

A backhoe and a hearse drive big up foot. I was so wanting to say a part of Ten to Saint Floyd's got it outside. But of course I didn't because I wouldn't.

But but when they they pulled the body out. They put the dirt back, which makes sense. And then the first rain, the dirt bike down. So it was like the outline of a cut off of a perfect grave site, you know that.

But, you know, these are I'm sure these are the typical start ups. Yeah, it's it's difficult. Yeah, it's I sure the, the New York start ups are the same.

Exactly what I'm saying. But yeah, I think another one of my favorites is the CEO at the time couldn't get into his car. Laughter a late night because the cows are caked stains.

That's rough it that the guy on the property. That story. Yeah. Cow got out. Yeah. Oh and his his rooster used to always come on our property. Yeah. Chase everybody around. Yeah, yeah.

And that that property is now the labs. It's another lab. Looks like a spaceship. And yeah, in comparison, it's all modernized. Yeah. And beautiful. I mean, property's big, obviously, but.

So keep going then. So now we're now and that we're now we ended up in a big office space right by, Bank of America stadium. So everybody enjoys that. They go to the games.

Although the Panthers have not been winning. Well we've got Charlotte FC number one. Yeah they're doing great. Yeah. So that's hopefully still a lot of time.

This is broadcast. So that office is, you know, great location. And I think one of your buddies helped fund that. And, it's an old 1910, you know. Mill. Yeah. It's a beautiful spot.

Yeah, it's really cool. So now. So now we've brought everybody up to where we're us. We're 50 states. We're, you know, it's a we're still relatively small company.

Where do you see it going along? Not only us, but HRT as a whole. Because my experience through the years, which I've which is nowhere near as long as yours, is just becoming much more mainstream.

Yeah, people are talking about it. It's not it's not forbidden to say anymore. Yeah. We had a similar experience, I think, since I've been doing, been in this industry.

Yeah. I've seen a number of shifts and I think this shift that I've seen the most, the latest is where people are a lot more familiar with, you know, eating healthy, you know, food system.

And our food supply is not what it should be. So I think there's a, an awareness of, you know, not to just trust what is on the shelves that to give to take their own health in their own hands and start looking at what they're eating, how they're eating it, understanding what organic means, what you know, cage free means, and all that.

And and with that comes a portion of that in my mind is this there's a movement that is functional medicine. And so it's more what do you mean by functional functional medicine.

Functional medicine and proactive healthcare

It's got a lot of different definitions, but it's research based okay. So it's based on, you know, studies behind it that it works. But it's almost the pre pharmaceutical time in the in medicine where there were ways to eat.

Right. And herbs and supplements that you can take to make yourself healthier or just ways to make sure you're doing the right diet and exercise, those type of things.

If you if you ever watch that one of the biggest guys I think is Gary Brecher. Yep. And he's online and he's you see the movement with him and all the things that that he's getting people to be aware of, just really sometimes simple things like, in the morning, your body's dehydrated, drink a glass of water, and there's a lot of inflammation benefits with putting ginger in there.

Some fresh ginger and some lemon juice and fresh lemon juice and just drink that as your thing. And how do you feel that that attitude change has is how is that relevant to home, replacement therapy?

I think it's going to be a good thing because hormone therapy still to this day, a lot of people don't truly understand the benefit. And then, you know, I think because hormone therapy is a prescription, they believe, well, if it's a prescription and my primary care doctor doesn't tell me about it, then it must not be good or there must be something wrong with it and that, you know, that's not close to the truth.

And if you think about what hormone replacements doing, which is essentially replenishing your body from the hormones, it's lost. And in a bio identical fashion that we talked about, you know, before then what what that really is doing, it's a lot more on the functional medicine side.

It's a lot more of the theory of let your body heal itself the right way. And, and so I think this movement that Gary Brecker and some other guys have got a lot of awareness actually helps the hormone, industry quite a bit because it's they're very much aligned.

How do you think that contrast in most people's idea, in my opinion, of health care is, is when is chronic chronic

conditions is treating something that I've already got, you know, all the way from I broke my leg to, you know, a cold or an illness or I'm just not feeling well.

And how do you feel like this is completely opposite in my opinion. Like what? How do you feel about that? Well, I might upset a few people, but I definitely feel like the system has become efficient at making people sick.

Yeah, and making money off of people that are sick. The system currently no longer wants you to be healthy. They want you to be fit sick. The insurance companies should make more money when you're healthy.

Yeah, that's not the way it works. They make more money when you're sick. The, the the brick and mortar investments that have been made by these hospital systems only work if there's people in them.

So if you start addressing the core issue, why people are showing up to these hospitals and why people are going in for care and the pharmaceutical companies, a long time ago, they stopped making medications that you could take and it cures you.

They they only work. I don't want to say only, but they primarily work on medications that you have to take every day. Yeah. It's that makes sense from a business standpoint, because if you take their medication every day, you're going to be on it.

The you're a customer for life. Yeah. They don't focus on how do we get rid of it because that then there'd be no revenue for them. So in my opinion, we have this machine has gotten so out of whack.

And, there's a lot of people talking about it. I don't think I'm the. No, you're definitely. No, no, I am great. So. And and what's the. So what's the difference between caring for a chronic condition and the approach of Revi to an Excel Medical?

So unfortunately insurance doesn't cover hormone replacement for men or women. It does at some small level. But the level it would do it, it would be we wouldn't get results because they're not going to they're not going to allow you, their provider to prescribe you to optimal levels.

Yeah. So as a result, the insurance isn't even a factor in this. And it should be because the insurance industry, if they did cover this, they would make you healthier.

The amount of people that I've seen Doctor Fattiness and our providers get off of depression medicine, cholesterol medicine, high blood pressure medicine, all these medications that come with age referred to all the time.

Yeah, for sure. Diabetes is a big one. Do all those you come off of that and you would think if you're an insurance company, you'd want your patients to be off those things that cost you money, but they make money in the entire system of people being sick.

I mean, look, this is the one industry that our costs keep going up and up and up. The more we invest, the sicker we get. Yeah. It's, you know, that's not by accident.

No. It definitely I said, how would you one of my, you know, use expressions you've coined which is proactive health care. What do you think. What's the philosophy behind that and how is that different.

So proactive health care, hormone replacement, functional medicine all kind of the same mentalities. What can you be doing to keep your body. It's you know at its optimal so that you fight against age related diseases.

So things like, you know, I think down the road, you know, we'll be doing cancer testing for heart disease testing and things like that. So those are the types of things that, will allow a patient to see exactly where they are.

Hormone therapy, aging, and healthy muscle mass

I mean, you know, hopefully they don't have cancer. Well, now, if you don't have cancer, what are some things we can do to minimize the chance of you getting cancer?

Guess what? If your hormones are at an optimal level, you have lower risks of all types of different cancers. So that's an exact, you know, direction that I think this industry and that.

But to me that's a a classic myth. That's the other way around. I hear that all the time. Oh, right. Was going to cause heart attacks is going to cause cancer.

Yeah. And reality is the complete opposite. That's correct. So it's it's a proactive health care approach to stop chronic conditions. So and so again I'm going to ask you the question if so a normal person on the street how what should they do.

How would they like this. Got to all be quite confusing from a you know my pro my pro at when regular doctor tells me there's my guy at the pub, tells me it's going to give me, you know, what does make the most sense?

Does making the most sense of letting you age, like you can look all around and see how people age. You know where they are and how their quality of life is horrible or does, you know, taking your hormone levels back to optimal and being active.

The for example, there's no debate that the older you get, the more muscle you have, the healthier are. Absolutely. Well, if testosterone helps you build muscle and, you know, if you look at me and you, we're not walking around here like muscle heads that we can't get in our shirts, we're just fit.

You know, we got we got, you know, good toned, you know, good, good percentage of muscle, but not, you know, not super optimal. It's just optimal. And so if that makes sense to you that having more muscle as you age is a benefit.

And using hormone replacement with the most optimal levels. When optimal levels, we take you to the levels that you your body's used to being at in your mid 20s or mid 30s.

So that to me makes common sense. Yep. So and I, I go look at the go look at people who have done both. Go look go look, go ask them. I think it's pretty obvious and I remember just reading recently that the number one way for to have a healthy old age is muscle mass.

Yeah. It's it's you know, you see the older the people who can't stand up properly and so on, they, that's all reversible through muscle mass and strength.

Well, I know this doesn't relate to your question, but I, I hear people all the time go, man, it sucks getting old. And I have honestly felt different.

I felt it's been awesome getting old. I'm physically as fit as I've ever been. My mental clarity is there, as active as 20 year olds? I mean, I was smarter than I was.

Yeah, you got the weight done with it. It's been great getting old. I agree with you. So yep. One of my favorite expressions is getting old is a privilege not denied to many.

So yeah. And the fact that we've we have this protocol that allows us do it and maintain health. I mean, I think it's something pretty special. Yeah. Cool. Okay.

Well, Craig, it's been a pleasure to have you here. Yeah, I'm sure I'm going to come up with more things to ask you on another show. Yeah. I'm love, I love it.

So yeah, I really appreciate learning from you. It's been a privilege. All right. Loved it. Well, thank you guys for listening. And until next time, take care.

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