The Startup Playbook Physicians Don’t Learn in Medical School with Venture Advisor Kim Sharp Transcript

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Why Physician Founders Matter

Welcome to the Startup [music] Physicians podcast, where we explore how doctors lead healthcare innovation. Please like and follow our show to join our community of physicians [music] contributing to meaningful change.

Hi everyone. Welcome back to [music] the Startup Physicians podcast. This is your host Dr. Allison Kerfman and today I have a very special guest with me and we are going to be discussing some of the hidden value and benefits of that physician founders bring to the table. I myself am a physician founder. It is a very important part of my mission to help other physicians find pathways and and resources to be able to bring their vision to life. I I know that on my personal pathway, I had so many guides. I had so many people that were opening doors for me and helping me to understand what is really a whole new world of venture capital. I did not have that experience having been a primarily a practicing clinician. I'm focused on helping doctors find these pathways and realize how important their ideas can be and how valuable these insights can be. I I want to help doctors have this one-to-many impact. So instead of just seeing individual patients, how can your ideas, the things that are just in your head all the time as you're practicing medicine, how could those actually lead to scalable and lasting change in the healthcare system?

So I am thrilled today to bring on one of my personal advisors, Kim Sharp. She is the senior advisor for our Startup Physicians Incubator program. She has been a good friend and mentor to me for quite some time and has always been so so generous with her perspective and guidance. And so Kim, thank you so much for joining me today. My gosh, it is such an honor to be here.

Meet Kim Sharp

I I'm super excited cuz this means we are launching this incubator and it's so exciting. I mean we are within we're within weeks of this vision of yours really coming to life and I'm so incredibly proud of you and I I just it floors me to think about all of the people that are going to be incredibly impacted from the founder physicians to the people that their innovation's going to actually impact. So I'm super excited to just be a part of that small little piece of the journey. So thanks for having me.

>> Well, thank you. Hopefully another thing that this podcast will relate to people is how great it is to have people on your team and mentoring you and helping support you and guide you. I know that Kim has offered me a lot of support and guidance along my journey lately, but we want to provide that for other physicians as well. So without further ado, I would love if you could share a little bit. I know you've supported just hundreds of companies launching throughout your career. So I'd love if you could share a little bit about your career background and journey and what you've seen kind of in the venture space. Yeah, so so first of all, I did not start out in the VC world or the capital markets world. I actually started my three decades of being in the business in the film business, in the entertainment business. And and then I pivoted at one point and went into wealth management and I really enjoyed it. I built a 1.7 billion dollar wealth management practice from the ground up.

It was super successful. I really enjoyed doing that. But then I also found the most exciting thing for me was not just managing the wealth, but actually, you know, going and helping venture to create the wealth. And I just happened very luckily happened to fall into the healthcare space and started consulting practice and one of my first things was to take a medical device through FDA and I had no idea what I was doing. It was one of those things where you just kind of learn as you go. But since then, I have consulted for a number of early stage and middle stage companies. I fell in love with the healthcare space. I just felt like it was where I could make the most impact with the knowledge that I have not being a care provider or a physician myself, but I could take my skills in business and in the capital markets and I could really serve the greater vision for folks and have the impact that way. I loved it. I worked with I worked in investment banking specifically out of New York and working in the healthcare and biotech

space. And I've loved it. I've worked now for the last year or so with a venture studio that's focused in healthcare and life sciences. So our focus there is really to create high velocity ventures using technology and healthcare at that intersection. That everybody's at that intersection now.

And it's been great. And for me, I have seen from a venture side the value of having a physician as a founder countless times. Primarily because the physicians really sit right there at the vortex of all of the issues and concerns that are in healthcare. So they're sitting right there on the value proposition, right? And they can see it and they often have great ideas on how to solve those problems that we from the outside are trying to solve and don't often get it correct. So I love working with a company that has has a founder base in it because they're the ones that are going to have going to be able to execute and get to market quickly. So I'm excited about this opportunity.

The problem is that the founders don't have access to how to take those ideas and make them into companies. So Yeah. I love that.

Why Physicians Have a Startup Advantage

Well, I mean I think that is highlighting I mean I felt like I got kind of like picked up out of an emergency department and dropped into a venture studio through a really cool opportunity I had. For the most part, physicians have no exposure to this world. Yeah. And I think that um you know, as you said, the the subject matter expertise and just understanding all the edge cases of a particular scenario ends up being incredibly valuable in the venture creation phase.

Yeah, no it is and there's a there's a big you can really tell the difference between a you know, a product or a service or an offering that's really been thought through from a physician's point of view versus you know, an outside business development team trying to come in and solve the problem. So there's real value there.

So I'm excited to do this with you and and hear all the great ideas that these physicians founders are going to bring to the table.

What Doctors Need to Learn Before Building

Yeah, so I thought that might be helpful for us to talk through some of the things that we've we've spent a lot of time discussing as we're planning our curriculum about some of the blind spots and and challenges that physicians have when they try to start their own startup. I I think that some of the things that are really important to me are that physicians understand how many options are available to them. A lot of times people start out by thinking my gosh, if I wanted to build X, Y, or Z, I'd have to figure it all out and I'd have to fund it all myself. I just it quickly becomes overwhelming. And one of the things I've learned by spending a lot of time with people like you is that there's just like exponential options of how to create a capital strategy or you know, you can partner, you can raise money, you can do non-dilutive funding.

There's just like a lot of options and I think that most people don't know all those. Do you see that same sort of mindset of people never starting because they don't understand the capital strategy options? Yeah, I mean completely. I mean they they have a great idea whether it's, you know, a medical device or it doesn't matter what the idea is, whether it's a SaaS program or whatever. They they have a great idea. They have nowhere to go with it.

It's a daunting world. The VC world is a really daunting world. You know, you guys have spent years and years sort of in the academics, right? And now you're practicing physicians and you're in this this I don't want to say it's a it's a bubble, but it's it is a certain bubble and you know, and the VC world is a bubble itself, right? And it has various personalities. The York are very different than the Silicon Valley, are very different than Miami. And so they look for different things in the way in which the venture might be set up. And then there's, you know, certain expectations of what you should the materials you should have together at certain stages. So it's kind of like have to come in from the outside and learn this whole language all over again. You have to learn the capital strategy language and the VC language and the the business development language. So it can be daunting and overwhelming, but what is

exciting I think is the way that you've broken down the Startup Physicians course is really really clear and very guided through each step. So it's not overwhelming and I think that that's that's the thing is you can take it in little chunks, right? >> Yeah. And and that's what's going to be great. And then, you know, when they start to see, wow, I've got this idea and there's really a go-to-market strategy for it and there's all these people I can partner with it and we get to brainstorm with them and we get to say to them, okay, great, you know, like let's go find get a partnership with Mayo Clinic for this or let's go get a partnership with, you know, whatever medical system that we need to. So that's going to be super exciting and I think all that creativity that I see in a lot of physicians, I think it's going to be spilled out on the paper of these incredible businesses that they're starting to form. So excited about that.

De-Risking Your Idea Before You Launch

I think one of the things we have to be willing to accept in the early stage is the concept of a minimum viable product. Part of that is understanding what are kind of the core things you need to have in place to be able to get in front of the right people and and get more validation on your idea. One of my core philosophies is to de-risk as much as possible on paper before you go building anything and that's what this program is really built around. Um, and it's built around creating things that we don't learn in med school. So, things like creating a financial model, an MVP, or prototype of your product, um, and then the right kind of sales pitch, business development sort of deck, and other other resources that you come in really polished to and identifying all the stakeholders that maybe need to weigh in. And that's part of the financial modeling that we do is try and figure out out of all these assumptions we're making. We're making hundreds, thousands of assumptions to create the business model, which ones are the ones that are actually the highest sensitivity that are the ones that could make or break the business case that I need to go out and talk to real stakeholders about. And I think back to my journey of when we were incubating my first company in those first couple months that it felt weird to be pitching cuz I was like, "What are we even pitching?" But you got to start getting yourself out there and getting that early market feedback. But you want to be prepared even for those early versions. But what we do is we create essentially three core assets that you will continue to iterate on, the financial model, the product, and the pitch. And all of those three things, as you're identifying the most important stakeholders and getting feedback, then you're iterating on those three things. Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I think that that's, you know, listen, part of what you want to do in venture creation is you want to fail fast. Okay? You want to be able to get out there, get the idea, and say, "Wait, it's doesn't seem like it's working. Like that's not the right way to go. How do I come back and reinvent and kind of put it out there again?" And I don't mean, you know, you have to get all the way to, you know, funding and get out into the market. I'm talking about I'm talking about building a community, um, and I think that's also what's also really exciting about what you're doing with Startup Physicians is that there's a community behind you.

You're not a solo entrepreneur, right? You've got all of these people, um, that can come alongside you. But it's important to get that idea out there. If it doesn't look like it's going to fit, if it's not going to work, then come back and reinvent it and go back out again. So, failing fast is a term we like to use a lot, and I think it's really important cuz it's going to get you to the right answer quicker. But we're doctors, we don't like to fail. >> [laughter] >> Welcome to the business world and the VC world.

It's true. I mean, I think that it is a limiting belief of a lot of physicians is that we're used to needing to do 20 years of training and preparation, board certification, all this stuff and expertise before we feel like we're ready to put anything out there. And so, I think that giving people a really structured process of like, "Here are the assets you need to create with your idea." And recognizing that you can be very agile. And, um, a lot times it has more to do with the founder than the concept, right? Like so, a lot of times people are betting on the founder, not not even the concept cuz the concept might change it will change, right? And so, we're looking for really great founders who are going to be visionary and really have their eyes on what is the overall goal, but be willing to expand their mindset of all the different ways you could create something to get to this this goal of what what you want to create for the healthcare system. Yeah.

Why Investors Bet on the Founder

Well, it's always about the founders. It's always about the team, um, especially when you're in pre-revenue. When you've got an idea and you've got a concept and you're looking for people to come in, whether it's friends or family,

or whether it's, you know, a pre-seed stage, they are betting that that that founder and that team is going to execute. That's it. I mean, it really is not necessarily about the product or the service that you're going to do. It's like, can these guys execute? And often times you will see similar types of, you know, right now everything is about AI and everybody's got, you know, a scribe, everybody's got an AI adjunctive, you know, end-to-end patient platform. And people are just throwing, you know, maybe 2 years ago people were throwing a lot of money at that. But it always came down to, is this team going to execute it? So, that's what everybody's buying. That's where you're going to raise your money is because you've got a team that can execute. And a team isn't just the people that are boots on the ground. You've got to develop great advisors that you're bringing on board with you as well. You've got to have a great board because those are those are the ones that are going to be your stopgap.

Uh, you may not have experiences, but you can bring in somebody from hospital system that, uh, you know, is going to make introductions for you. So, your advisory boards, um, are really important to help boost up that that execution team. For sure.

Financial Models, MVPs, and Pitch Decks

I And I think the things that will make them able to execute is that they clearly are operating with a plan. I think that, um, a lot of people don't end up understanding their unit economics at scale cuz there's really two separate financial plans. There's the launching plan that's like, "How do we get to like a steady state?" And then there's the steady state plan of what are the unit economics of this at scale?

These are not things we learned in medical school. These are things that learned from working at a firm with a bunch of investment bankers where I would just brain dump my vision of what the clinical model would be. And then we would work with people that have have a ton of expertise in this field to create a model. And the model is what we work off of when we're doing all of our pitches and all of our product planning. And it needs to change a lot over time. Sometimes it's like, "Oh my god, the unit economics don't work out. If I did this, I would lose money." You know, and so you want to figure that out on paper and be like, "How do I make a different plan?" And so, both the launch plan and the steady state {slash} scaling plan, those are tools that we will be supporting founders through because it then becomes your operational model. It's not just your visionary model of like, "Oh, what could this be worth in 10 years if I were to do it?" It then becomes, "Okay, you've got a contract, you've got revenue, you've got funding, whatever it is. Now it's time to go. Like we have a plan to follow. We know how to manage to the model." Yeah. Yeah, well, that's super important because, um, you know, understanding the milestones, right? Right? But first of all, you have to know your numbers. I mean, you get in front of a potential investor or a VC, you better know your numbers. You better know what your COGS are, you better know what your runaway rate is. You better know what your your performance estimations need to be, your margins. You have to know those numbers like there's no tomorrow. But the one thing they're always going to ask you are what are the key milestones that get you to that next level, right? Maybe the next funding level or maybe the next partnership level or maybe the next contract. But there's a rhythm. There's a rhythm to getting out there and creating that business and gaining traction. There's real traction and it's taking down those milestones. At the same time, those milestones really trigger funding rounds, right? So, it's interesting because there's definitive patterns to all of that and I'm excited to teach everyone how you go about doing that. What's the right framing for, you know, friends and family? What's the right framing for a pre-seed? What's a seed extension? When do we get to series A? What does it look like if we get to series B or C, D, and H, actually? Super I mean, it that's all part of it. And, um, knowing those numbers, understanding what those milestones are going to be for yourself, and then when it's appropriate to do the next raise is super important, too. So.

That's something >> might have sounded really intimidating to someone who's like, "Oh my gosh, you got to know your numbers and I don't know what any of those things are that she just said. I guess I can't do this." I just want to go back and emphasize that like one of the things that doctors are really good at is learning stuff. So, you you have a have a unbelievable track record of being able to learn and really immerse yourself in, uh, new understanding. And what you need is a guide. And you need to get really laser focused on like what I need to be doing this month. Not, "Oh my gosh, in 18 months there's this other thing that I don't know how to do that it's on the horizon." It's like, "Nope. Nope. Focus." Um, and so that's why I feel like creating a really structured pathway for people. And I'll I'll give an example of how we intend to run this so that people can visualize this from say for from the perspective of a financial model. One of the things that's so amazing right now starting a company versus when I was incubating

mine in 2022 is it is true that with the advent of AI, you really can get pretty far as a solo founder with a lot of the core needs.

So, for instance, we will when we do our financial modeling core curriculum, we will be teaching you. That's the part where you're really good at learning.

You're going to get it. You're going to understand it. And then we have an entire suite of AI tools that I've been using in all of my businesses for the past several years in modifying and updating them that can perform at the level of like similar to what I did with investment bankers. It used to be I would have to like get all of my clinical knowledge out of my head and communicate it to the finance team on what needs to go into the model. And then I would have to kind of hand it off and wait for the model to be built, and then we'd have another alignment meeting where they would present back their financial model to me, and I would provide feedback on whether it captured the clinical model. And then at the same time, we'd be like pitching to payers and getting some feedback, and I'd be coming back and be like, "Here's what needs to change." And it was a pretty big team contributing to this. And now we can do a lot of that with AI. It is not It doesn't replace, uh, formally made model, but it gets you so far in the right direction. So, what we'll do is we'll do a core curriculum teaching with Kim and I on financial modeling.

Then we'll give you the tools to work with on your own so that you have the MVP of your financial model. And then we bring in our expert speaker who is going to be someone who's a done thousands of these and can teach even more deeper on this subject. And then people can book one-on-one with that expert person to to go through with a fine-tooth comb and get direct feedback on their individual models. So, the month that we're doing financial modeling, they should be able to walk out with a personalized, customized financial model that then they know what to do with cuz like I said, this is an iterative process.

Every time you get feedback, every time you grow to a new stage, you're going to be going back to this as it's like the core operational plan. Yeah. I mean, that is that is huge. I can tell you, you know, even from like a consulting perspective, you know, people would bring me in, you know, founders would bring me in and they would never have their financial modeling right. And you're like, oh my gosh, you don't understand.

And so, gosh, I mean, even just being able to walk out to say in the next 6 months from doing this course that you're going to literally have in your hands a working model, financial model, is really a huge value add. I mean, it would take a long time of a lot of failure and a lot of years to probably get even that one piece that might be that's workable now. So, that's a really really great great value that we're going to be bringing to all of these founders. So, And I see it as being, you know, a lot of people come into this as like, I have a vision, I have an idea, I can make a pitch deck. And the pitch deck is like the piece of the iceberg that sits above the water. It's especially, yeah, with AI now it is easier to to verbalize your concept and to like create a nice deck and make it look good, but like the core of what makes people want to partner with you or fund you is what lies below the surface, which is really that foundation of the model. And and then we'll get into also the product itself. And those things are if you miss them, then like you're not going to know your numbers. You're going to be making stuff up and just have a pretty pitch deck. Yeah, well but you know, the the thing about the thing about the financial models and I and I want to say this. So, so with the part of the strategy about funding and when you're sitting in front of a potential investor who's going to give you money, it doesn't matter if it's your grandmother, your mom, whoever it is, right? You know, they they want to know that you've thought through everything. And that gets reflected in the financial model, right? The the financial model is that instrument that's going to say to you, yeah, we really thought about here's how we're going to stagger bringing on people. Here's how we're going to do marketing.

Here's our legal. Here's you know, our manufacturing if that's if that needs to happen. So, part of what that that that financial model is is helping you really think through really the business plan and the go-to-market strategy and it is right there on that Excel spreadsheet that everybody can see, well, they really thought this through. And that's really important.

Data Rooms, Cap Tables, and Venture Readiness

Yeah, and and that is in the progression of your interactions with a firm or funders or anything, you can have your pre-NDA conversation and then you execute an NDA and then you should have a data room available, which I

know that is not something that most physicians know about, but if you actually are looking for partnerships, like they're going to need to see more than a pitch deck. So, I think the financial model is a huge piece of value that we will not only teach people how to make and make sure they have all the expertise available to them to continue to make it better, but they'll understand the philosophy of how this builds into the backbone. The other big thing that I've seen trip up founders is product and particularly creating technical product because we are inherently non-technical founders most of the time. Some of them may have a development background, but that's pretty rare in the physician space. I have a background codeveloping a lot of software as a When I say non-technical, I mean, I don't know how to code. I don't write code. There is a lot you can do nowadays with live coding or basically using AI large language models to you talk to it in English and it writes code. But even beyond that, like a lot of tools that I've I've gone very deep on lately on on getting really qualified to help support at least the MVP of product build. And I myself self have like developers that I'm working with to help create product.

I've been an observer on multiple projects where without the right product strategy and oversight, it balloons really fast. I've been part of projects that flushed seven figures on technical development that didn't have the right strategic oversight cuz you can just code and code and code anything. But if you're not actually managing to a product roadmap with really clear strategy that matches to that same business plan and financial plan, you can get so off track. Yeah. Yeah.

Completely. I mean, that those are and you can waste it like you said, you can waste a lot of money. And at some point, that's either your money or it's investors' money. And when you take investors' money, you have a fiduciary responsibility to manage that money appropriately. We'll We'll talk a lot about that, too, cuz that's a that's a big thing. Like, you know, what does it mean to take investors' money? What does it mean to be on a cap table? What does it mean to set up your cap table? That's Those are really great strategies that that I think everybody needs to learn. They need to learn language. They need to learn the strategies. You mentioned a great thing, which is the data room. You know, one of the things that I think is really important is you can when I see and I see a lot of deal flows. I mean, that's what I do. I see a lot of deal flows, right? And so, you can really tell a difference between somebody who comes across as a real serious founder, an entrepreneur because they're going to have things like a data room in place. They're going to have a pitch. They're going to have performance. They're going to have all of these, you know, their IP is going to be identified. It's going to be sitting in that data room. So, versus someone who's just like, hey, got a great pitch, got a great idea, here it is. But and then you're like, wow, you were so not ready to be in front of me. And I think that's what's really exciting is, you know, if you think about this in a matter of months, Allison, with with what you're building here, these folks are going to be able to really be in front of people. And and, you know, and we're going to be proud to be I'm going to be proud that they're going to be in front of people, right? You know, we're going to be like, yes, you can get in front of people now.

Building Advisors, Community, and Support

But they have to get they have to they have to really prove themselves throughout the course, too, right? Sure. I mean, I my thought is we got to help you understand this world. You're entering a new world, so give you the amount you can process like one bite at a time to create these skills, create these assets for your concept. And be your sounding board. I just feel like there's so much I've built companies in a venture studio environment where I had a ton of resources. There were so many people, so many experts. If I needed something, I knew exactly who to call. I had co-founders. I was It was a great It was super fun. Um and then the experience of building something as a sole proprietor. And it can be so lonely. And I feel like the first thing you need to know is like who what are your lifeboats? Like who are you going to call on? How are you going to keep I mean, I I invest a lot of coaching for myself, but like how do I keep myself accountable and moving forward? Because like there's nobody around here telling me what to do. Like how do you actually build yourself an accountability system? But then beyond that, there's so many things that are going to come up that you legit don't know the answer to. And I mean, AI is great for a lot of things, but it's also like I just need people I could text. I need people I can call. I need people who I can say like, can you look at this clause in this contract? Do you think that's weird? You know, you're going to come across so many situations that you don't you've never experienced before. And so, that's why I think building your bench or your community of people that you can call on as a founder is one of the most important first things you do.

Whether that's in a more formal capacity of like actually bringing in advisors or a more informal capacity of finding, you know, peer community that is also building that can give you insight and feedback because we're inherently

connection people. We We need that to to really be able to reach our goals. And I think that some people may say like, well, I was able to do like this MVP or I built this prototype with AI and it's great and I already have talked to a few people. And I think where I really want to differentiate like the types of founders we're looking for and and where some people could be off track is I think there's a difference between people that want to start a small business and a startup. It's a very different philosophy, a very different mentality. Some people may be hearing us talk about data rooms and venture and they're like, I don't know, that sounds like really big and and out of scope for me. Like I know what I can do.

Building for Scale vs. Starting Small

I know I can make this product or service using my clinical skills and I'm thinking of this as like a single site thing and I'm learning business and I'm learning cash flow and revenue generation and all of that. My challenge to people like that is like you're going to have to do business planning whether you're starting a small business or startup.

And so, would you rather affect 100 people or a million people? I think that the planning is just a different philosophy. I have talked to founders and physicians who have maybe like a couple of sites that they run that are really doing well with their, you know, center of excellence or something and they're like, I want to open more. I could fund this myself by doing it one at a time, but I'm kind of thinking I might want to open 10. You know, and and it's like, what which path do you want to take? Cuz you're going to need capital if you're going to want to open 10, but you're going to be nationwide in 2 years and not have two sites. So, I don't know if you want to think talk a little bit about the startup mindset and just the idea of like you could take your idea and build it for scale, not for a small business. Yeah, I mean, I I think yes. I mean, I I come from the I come from a venture world, right? So, for me, it's all about scaling, right? You know, for for for the world that I come from is not necessarily a small business. I mean, although I've I have, like you said, I've consulted, you know, I've done many many consults. I've worked with many solopreneurs, right? But, for me, you know, in being in the VC the VC world, and where I think I my experience has been when I've worked with a physician founder before, they really want to impact the masses. I think it comes from their heart of wanting to be a a care provider, right? Like, they really want to make bigger impact has been my experience. And so, for me, it's always been about how do I take that how do I help them scale that particular idea, whether, you know, to point whether it's a device or it's a a pharmaceutical or a novel therapeutic that they're trying to come up with or or um or a SaaS model, whatever it is. But, I do think one of the things is you're going to that seed is going to get passed along. And I think that's something that you have to understand if you come into this world as a founder, you're going to be able to take it so far. And whether that means a private equity firm is going to come in and buy it, or whether, you know, it's a VC is going to come in and start to take control a little bit control over it, you have to understand that you know, for whatever reason you were given this opportunity to create this idea, but then you have to kind of learn to pass the baton. Because it is about scaling and it's about growing and maybe eventually going IPO, whatever whatever might be. So, I've seen I've seen people hang on too tight, and it totally blows up. But, when you recognize it does take getting it to that next level and then handing it off to the next person, you can still stay in it and still stay involved in it. And again, that's part of that cap table strategy, right? But, it's always going to be more valuable for you to recognize I've played this role, let's bring in somebody else that can play a better role and a bigger role that's more suited for it, and then hand it hand it off. It's kind of like watching your child grow up and go off to college. Yeah, I identify Then you then you send it away. I identify deeply with that and can certainly um yeah, I guide founders as well on that journey.

But, you know, the the thing that's really interesting is most entrepreneurs I know who have had a successful startup, then they start 10 more. You know, it's like it's like it's a pattern. It's like, well, I could take this idea. Oh, like, here's the pieces. Like, it's a pattern. I don't know what it is. I don't know what it is. I'm not really sure. Yeah. But, but you there are patterns. I mean, there there's just like core things that everyone needs at different stages, and uh it's it feels super foreign when you haven't done it before. And then once you've done it, you're like, oh, yep, that's that's a replicable pattern. You just swap out the concept and get all the other pieces in place. And then the other thing that I think is so so important is it's it's mainly about who you know, right?

Strategic Networks and Warm Introductions

It's about what rooms you can get into, and I have some examples of what it feels like to have like the executive

sponsorship of somebody who has really great connections, and I remember going to I like I went to speak to the CEO of United HealthCare before we ever even started Imagine, but the person that had recruited me was like, I'm going to Minnesota to meet with the CEO of United HealthCare on Tuesday. You want to come and tell me your idea for pediatrics? And I just was not used to people opening doors for me. I think in the traditional system, there's a lot of hierarchy, there's a lot of like, that's not your place. Like, uh you're too young. You're too whatever. And to have someone to open a door for me that literally just took their own reputation and their own connection and said, you should listen to what she has to say.

She has a really great idea. It was amazing. It led to the birth of this concept that has impacted so many tens of thousands of children. And I think that we just don't have these networks when we're coming from traditional health care. I think that one of the things that's built into our curriculum is outreach from the very beginning. So, even if it's just very early stakeholder outreach that's maybe low stakes and easier for physicians to do, getting getting feedback from other physicians, getting feedback from people in their network on their concepts in a structured way. We're going to give them like, this is what you should be asking. This is how you should structure it and take that feedback. Moving on to like, how are we like really narrowing in on what are the problems or the questions or the things that still need to be solved? And maybe it's a gap in like distribution network or you know, partnership or funding. And we are building up towards the November health conference. So, HLTH is this amazing event. It's totally overwhelming. It's in Vegas, and it's like a bajillion people, but everyone in health tech is there, and it is such a great environment to close all those loops because everyone is there. And so, Kim and I have talked about how we envision that as our founders are moving through the program and every month doing strategic outreach and outreach and stakeholder conversations, that we're really getting clear on what do they need and who do they need?

And that people will walk into the health meeting with an entire full list of all the meetings they need to have with the right people to get their concept off the ground. My gosh, absolutely.

Preparing for HLTH and Investor Meetings

I mean, I think that's what Listen, I mean, I I wish uh years ago I really had known to be that strategic about it. Um now, you know, I I know so much. But, yeah, I mean, I'm excited because, you know, the founders are all going to have their pitch deck are going to be down. The data room's going to be ready. They're going to know specifically the VCs and the investors who are going to be there that they need to have conversations with, right? And we're going to be telling them, this is the person you need to go to, or maybe it's somebody that I've helped introduce them to. You've got a great network of people. We've got a lot of what we call our faculties and our mentors that are all going to be there throughout this journey to say, listen, I know this person over here at this company or this firm or this this VC or private equity firm, whatever it is, and here's my introduction. Think believer, and you know, if it can be a warm introduction, it's always better. Uh but, they're going to walk in with an absolute game plan, and they're going to execute. So, um super excited about that. And then, they're going to be so well prepared with those meetings that they've had to get to that next level. When we close out, we have our our our pitch competition at the end just to kind of close it out. But, they're going to be really armed with everything they absolutely need, uh and they'll be they'll be ready to go. And we'll be we're going to be proud of them. I'm going to be so excited. Like, wow, we got them to to do the pitch the right way. They're going to know their numbers. Their cap tables are going to be in space, and they're going to go and make a great a great impact. So, It's so exciting to think about. And I think the last piece that we're really bringing to the table is like, this should be fun. Like, we should be doing this with other I I love being around founders. I think founders are some of the most optimistic, like, positive people, visionary people I've ever spent time with. I myself really think that way. Um I think it's great to have an abundance mindset. I I go into pretty much every business I make thinking like, I don't have any competition. Like, I I I really don't cuz it's just it's what I'm bringing to it is what's making this unique and special. And And I think that having peers that push you and are challenging you and are giving you feedback, I think the community that we're building is a huge piece of the value. I myself I think I'm in like three different masterminds right now for various reasons, but the relationships that I have created in those communities and in the ways that it has helped me to grow and just accelerate my progress is undeniable. And so, we do have some in-person events. We have an August event in Nashville, and then we have our retreat in Las Vegas right before health. So, that we will be getting spending 3 days two three days together as a cohort, getting all the i's dotted and the t's crossed, and everyone practicing and finishing up pieces that need to be figured out, and continuing to teach on how we pitch, how we fundraise, and making sure

that everyone is really supported going into the health meeting.

I think it's going to be fun. I think it's it's going to be I'm so excited. And you know what I envision? I We kind of talked about this. I'm just going to share this. So, my vision is at health that we have our whole like, we have our cohort, right? Of our startup physicians, and they each have their own little booth, right? Where everybody can buy and see them. And So, I just I'm envisioning our entire little section, right? That's got all of our founders there, and and they're taking meetings, and there's lots of energy going on. Uh and they're going over to the bullpen where the investors meet cuz they're running over there. Oh, I my meeting starts in a few minutes. I got to go over there first. Wait, I've got to get a partnership over here. It's going to be a crazy crazy couple of days at health, but uh it the energy is amazing.

Um and and you'll just feed off of it. It's just going to get better.

Who the Startup Physicians Incubator Is For

I love that vision, and I know we've got a lot of connections at the the health organization, and we've we've talked about how we can make that happen and make this be an incredible experience to actually get you launched. Um And so, launch might mean different things to different people. There are some people I've talked to who have said like, hey, like, I actually already have a prototype of an app. I was going to start sharing it with people like in June. Does that mean I'm too far along? And it's like, nope. Unless you have built a startup before or you're already funded, like, all of what we're teaching is so important for the initial life cycle of a startup, no matter where you are. All of these core modules are something that you have to foundationally have in place and then know how to iterate and continue to grow it and continue to expand it. So, I think that who we're looking for we're looking for people who are um visionary founders. They believe the world can be a better place. They believe healthcare can be better. You're not running friends from something, you're running to something. There is something you feel compelled to do in healthcare and and you believe in yourself that you are able to do that with the right support. We are looking for people who are action takers. None of this is passive. It's hard, but that's why we do it and that's it there's massive reward both um from a career standpoint and from just a a personal standpoint. And so, we're looking for people to do the work. We will provide the work. We will provide the guidance, the support, the network, but they have to do the work. And then, we're not really bringing in people we're calling this more of like a zero to launch program, but that could be anywhere from I have a concept and it's um you know, passed through our you know, selection committee and our selection committee feels like this is this is a viable concept that could really launch in November all the way to people who actually maybe already have an operating model. They could even have some early revenue, but probably cut off if if they've already received venture funding that's that's a little too advanced for this particular program, but I have been so impressed by the physicians we already have in our pipeline and in applying to the program.

>> you're telling me. It's incredible. Like, oh my gosh, this is amazing. Really. >> And I could just envision how many millions of patients that these companies are someday going to affect.

And so, that's what drives a lot of us as physicians is impact. Um and so, I think that as we wrap up, I hope that we've been able to convey to people what value you bring, how even if this is something that you are not familiar with at all, you have the capacity to be to learn. If you put yourself in an environment where you have the right guidance and connections and tools, um you're so capable. Yeah. Yes. We're going to make it fun. We're going to make it easy. It is going to be challenging. I mean, it's it's a it's a you're about to enter a crazy crazy world, but it is a wonderful world and it's where you like Allison said, it's where you can impact just millions and millions and millions of people and that's legacy. That's that's really the wealth that we're all really looking for, right? So, thank you for letting me be a part of it. Excited.

How to Apply to the Incubator

>> Yes. So, anyone who's interested in learning more can go to startupphysicians.com/incubator. We also have a free um guide for physician founders and that can be found at startupphysicians.com/resources.

But even if you are kind of on the fence and you're like, I don't know if this is right for me. I don't know if my idea is

good enough. There is no cost to apply.

Our process is that as you apply, we'll review applications and set people up for interviews who seem like competitive candidates and I will be doing individual interviews with all of the founders um to assess their concepts and the fit and make sure I can answer any questions they have about the program. I want it to be a fit on both sides um and I again, I want to select concepts that I truly believe can launch by November with a really successful business model.

Um and it's it's also important to note that we don't take equity. We will talk about pricing on the call, but we a lot of accelerators take equity early stage up to like 7 8% equity, which you know, when you're early and you're like, well, I don't have any revenue yet. It may seem like, well, I I I don't have the money to support this program, so it's kind of nice. I can just give equity to be part of this, but that could be worth eight or nine figures later. Like, it literally could be worth that much millions. I want founders to retain complete ownership of their cap table until they have the very deep understanding of what their capital strategy is going to be and then you choose your options. Yeah. And there's a lot of options.

Why the Incubator Does Not Take Equity

And the other thing, too, is that having the wrong people on the cap table early is not good. It'll it'll kind of automatically put you off to the sidelines. So, you know, having too much equity given away at the beginning, having the wrong person, having received it are not good things to do. And we can certainly help you avoid those pitfalls. And there's all kinds of I'm excited to share all kinds of strategies about that. So, and I do think that's really wonderful for for Allison not and for Startup Physicians not to take that equity because there's a lot of out there that are doing that and and it it does in the long run damage not damage, but it it impedes seeds those founders for sure.

I just don't think that the sort of founders that I'm supporting are in a position to be making a decision about their cap table strategy yet. So, I think that Why not? Yeah. So, this is me by a physician for physicians wanting to design a program that allows you to create the the most pathways available to you. So, if this is interesting to you, please consider applying. We will have applications open um I think through May and the program starts in July. So, it runs July through December. The retreats are in August and November and um all the information is on the website. There's no cost to apply. It's just the first step in getting into the pipeline and we do have rolling admissions and and limited seats available. So, when we close, we will be closing the cohort. So, if you're interested, I would highly recommend you apply now and um we can have a conversation. Thank you so much, Kim, for all of your insight and joining me and all of the energy that you bring and we're just really excited for this journey together. Let's go. Thank you.

Closing Thoughts

I'm so excited to be a part of this team cuz it's an amazing team. So, thank you. All right. Thanks, everyone. Thanks [music] for listening to the Startup Physicians podcast. This community was built for doctors who want to contribute to the future of healthcare. We offer support for physicians [music] who are ready to make the next step towards building the career they've dreamed of. Visit startupphysicians.com [music] to learn more. And if this episode resonated with you, share it with another friend who needs to hear it. Let's change the future of healthcare [music] together.