What’s Slowing Oral Health Innovation? Transcript

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Introduction to Whole-Person Care

Most founders are [music] building Most founders are [music] building solutions for symptoms while ignoring solutions for symptoms while ignoring one of the biggest drivers [music] of one of the biggest drivers [music] of whole person care, which is moral whole person care, which is moral health. In today's episode, we sat down health. In today's episode, we sat down with Katie D. Amo, [music] with Katie D. Amo, [music] leader of CareQuest Innovation Partners, leader of CareQuest Innovation Partners, operator of the Smile Health Accelerator operator of the Smile Health Accelerator and a healthcare [music] innovation and a healthcare [music] innovation leader advancing medical dental leader advancing medical dental innovation across the healthcare [music] innovation across the healthcare [music] ecosystem. Together, we discover why ecosystem. Together, we discover why adoption, workflow integration, and adoption, workflow integration, and collaborative infrastructure [music] collaborative infrastructure [music] matter more than height. If founders matter more than height. If founders want to scale in healthcare, want to scale in healthcare, healthcare entrepreneurs, are you ready healthcare entrepreneurs, are you ready to rewrite the rules for your business to rewrite the rules for your business so you can have more time off, [music] a so you can have more time off, [music] a great team, and more income while great team, and more income while creating a positive social impact? Then creating a positive social impact? Then you are in the right place. Welcome to you are in the right place. Welcome to the provider's [music] the provider's [music] edge. I'm your host, Sabrina Rampach.

edge. I'm your host, Sabrina Rampach. I'm a provider, an international [music] I'm a provider, an international [music] peak performance keynote speaker, and a peak performance keynote speaker, and a best-selling author. Let's open the best-selling author. Let's open the gateway to profitability for [music] gateway to profitability for [music] you. Today, my guests and I helps you.

Katie D. Amo and CareQuest Overview

Today, my guests and I helps healthc care entrepreneurs and startup healthc care entrepreneurs and startup founders like you break through barriers founders like you break through barriers so you can control your business, so you can control your business, control your [music] life, and control control your [music] life, and control your future. This is your defining your future. This is your defining Welcome, Katie. She is the amazing Welcome, Katie. She is the amazing person behind a mission-driven healthc person behind a mission-driven healthc care leader who has been covering a care leader who has been covering a decade of experience identifying, decade of experience identifying, operationalizing, and scaling operationalizing, and scaling transformative solutions to some of the transformative solutions to some of the industry's most complex challenges. and industry's most complex challenges. and across digital, women's health and oral across digital, women's health and oral health, which are all some of the things health, which are all some of the things that we care so much about because we that we care so much about because we all know everything really start from all know everything really start from the mouth. food is nutrition and in her the mouth. food is nutrition and in her current role leading CareQuest current role leading CareQuest Innovation Partners, the for-profit arm Innovation Partners, the for-profit arm of CareQuest Institute, the world's of CareQuest Institute, the world's largest world health and the world's largest world health and the world's largest oral health nonprofit. Katie is largest oral health nonprofit. Katie is advancing the critical mission to make advancing the critical mission to make world health more integrated. And I world health more integrated. And I think those is definitely some of the think those is definitely some of the key points that we have been talking key points that we have been talking about a lot is integration is no longer about a lot is integration is no longer seeing health care as a separate seeing health care as a separate specialty. We're so used to practicing specialty. We're so used to practicing medicine as you're the cardiac, you're medicine as you're the cardiac, you're the reno, you're the pulmonary, you're the reno, you're the pulmonary, you're the dental. We need to refer you to see the dental. We need to refer you to see that instead of how do we get back to that instead of how do we get back to where medicine used to be. We're where medicine used to be.

Why Oral Health Integration Matters

We're collectively talking about patient in collectively talking about patient in that round table's perspective and then that round table's perspective and then start thinking how one thing is start thinking how one thing is connected to the next and that's where connected to the next and that's where accessibility accessibility accessibility credibility through everything from credibility through everything from innovation to funding across the whole innovation to funding across the whole health care system and I'm so fortunate health care system and I'm so fortunate she's here with us because they are she's here with us because they are evaluating hundreds of companies evaluating hundreds of companies innovation startups across the board and innovation startups across the board and really focus on u oral health and we really focus on u oral health and we doing health and it's a definitely a doing health and it's a definitely a exciting first time they have a huge exciting first time they have a huge world purveillion with many of her world purveillion with many of her startups showing up in their startups showing up in their accelerator. So Katie your journey has accelerator. So Katie your journey has been always very exciting. So at what been always very exciting. So at what point how much work did you have to do point how much work did you have to do to push that world health pavilion to go to push that world health pavilion to go into health?

into health? [laughter] [laughter] [laughter] >> Yes, thank you so much for having me >> Yes, thank you so much for having me Sabrina. Excited to be here today. And Sabrina. Excited to be here today. And you know there's always when you're you know there's always when you're playing in some of these historically playing in some of these historically overlooked area whether it's digital overlooked area whether it's digital health precoid women's health or oral health precoid women's health or oral health you know there are questions and health you know there are questions and it it is a similar pattern and you know it it is a similar pattern and you know but when you bring the right data points but when you bring the right data points and champions behind it you know you and champions behind it you know you start to see when you start incorporate start to see when you start incorporate these historically overlooked areas you these historically overlooked areas you know there's improvements in outcome and know there's improvements in outcome and equity and billions of cost savings to equity and billions of cost savings to the system and you know super excited the system and you know super excited for the discussion today. There's so for the discussion today. There's so much opportunity and momentum in oral much opportunity and momentum in oral health and at CareQuest we're we're health and at CareQuest we're we're truly in a very unique position in the truly in a very unique position in the ecosystem like you mentioned sitting at ecosystem like you mentioned sitting at the center of hundreds of global the center of hundreds of global startups focused on oral and integrated startups focused on oral and integrated health. We work with a amazing community health.

Building the Smile Health Accelerator

We work with a amazing community of public and private corporate partners of public and private corporate partners and also investors. And so, you know, we and also investors. And so, you know, we recognize this change isn't going to recognize this change isn't going to happen overnight. Um, and it really will happen overnight. Um, and it really will take a village. And so, taking that take a village. And so, taking that partnership ecosystemdriven approach and partnership ecosystemdriven approach and including partners like health who have including partners like health who have quickly seen the importance of oral quickly seen the importance of oral health and overall health and have been health and overall health and have been wonderful champions with us and bringing wonderful champions with us and bringing that message to the broader healthc care that message to the broader healthc care conference to over 15,000 attendees conference to over 15,000 attendees there.

there. there. >> Exactly. It's all about recognizing what >> Exactly. It's all about recognizing what we already seeing in the market and we already seeing in the market and nutrition as medicine has been talked nutrition as medicine has been talked about for the past few years and as about for the past few years and as we're pushing that as a new way of we're pushing that as a new way of thinking how do we prevent treat and thinking how do we prevent treat and taking care of our longevity then taking care of our longevity then everything actually start from nutrition everything actually start from nutrition right it start from the oral health and right it start from the oral health and in some degree the funny thing is last in some degree the funny thing is last year I went to a a comedian and who's a year I went to a a comedian and who's a dentist right and then the whole entire dentist right and then the whole entire show major majority and there's a one show major majority and there's a one attendee going around it's like are you attendee going around it's like are you a dentist or hygienist right and then a dentist or hygienist right and then about 80% of the rooms are in there who about 80% of the rooms are in there who are dentists because they understand the are dentists because they understand the joke of are we a doctor what are we are joke of are we a

doctor what are we are we cosmetic right and also is private we cosmetic right and also is private practice I think the business side of practice I think the business side of dental care oral care does help not so dental care oral care does help not so much like medical practitioners because much like medical practitioners because many people are going to large entities many people are going to large entities right so sometimes times our thinking right so sometimes times our thinking our innovation are felt restricted our innovation are felt restricted because where the funding coming from oh because where the funding coming from oh your large health system has to prove your large health system has to prove that that's where you're thinking the that that's where you're thinking the private entity have to prove that versus private entity have to prove that versus in some of the smaller traditional in some of the smaller traditional practices we can start thinking about practices we can start thinking about how can we as individual clinicians how can we as individual clinicians individual experts help to drive that individual experts help to drive that innovation forward and I think a lot of innovation forward and I think a lot of my work as you know and your work as my work as you know and your work as well is that helping those women led at well is that helping those women led at these subniche area that people haven't these subniche area that people haven't spent enough time. How do we tilt that spent enough time. How do we tilt that balance scale, right? And then that's balance scale, right? And then that's where you guys have been stepping in and where you guys have been stepping in and doing so well. So tell us a bit more doing so well. So tell us a bit more about the accelerators and that you guys about the accelerators and that you guys have because we all know we love to help have because we all know we love to help a lot of innovation companies but a lot of innovation companies but there's just no way that we can help there's just no way that we can help everyone. So there are things that we everyone. So there are things that we always see as the green flags versus red always see as the green flags versus red flags. What are you guys looking for flags. What are you guys looking for when you're putting each cohort when you're putting each cohort together?

together? together? >> Yes, great question. We are in our fifth >> Yes, great question. We are in our fifth year of our smile health accelerator. We year of our smile health accelerator. We work with matter. We work with 20 work with matter. We work with 20 different industry and investor partners different industry and investor partners who we love working with clinicians. We who we love working with clinicians. We also have payers. We have partners also have payers. We have partners across both the medical and the dental across both the medical and the dental side. And you know together every year side. And you know together every year we review all the different applications we review all the different applications that come in taking a a very strong that come in taking a a very strong mission first approach and also mission first approach and also multidisciplinary and you know we're multidisciplinary and you know we're very much looking past solutions that very much looking past solutions that are you know just a hype. We're looking are you know just a hype. We're looking at you know tactical proof points you at you know tactical proof points you know will it fit into actual clinical know will it fit into actual clinical workflows. Is it meaningfully engaging workflows. Is it meaningfully engaging or reducing friction for providers or or reducing friction for providers or patients? And you know, we at CareQuest patients? And you know, we at CareQuest remain deeply committed to solutions and remain deeply committed to solutions and founders who are focused or are founders who are focused or are currently helping serve some of those currently helping serve some of those underserved, underrepresented underserved, underrepresented populations. So, we are actually going populations.

Funding, Pilots, and Startup Support

So, we are actually going to be launching applications again this to be launching applications again this year. Every year we get about a hundred year. Every year we get about a hundred different startups apply from 15 or so different startups apply from 15 or so different countries. And you know, we different countries. And you know, we see more toothbrushes and types of see more toothbrushes and types of innovative toothpaste than you can ever innovative toothpaste than you can ever imagine. And you know, we see a lot of imagine. And you know, we see a lot of breakthroughs within oral health and breakthroughs within oral health and also helping move the needle to exactly also helping move the needle to exactly what you're talking about drive more of what you're talking about drive more of that integrated care. So those are some that integrated care. So those are some of the the key things that we're really of the the key things that we're really looking at together with our ecosystem looking at together with our ecosystem of partners.

of partners. >> That's the exciting part now is >> That's the exciting part now is international applicants. We are also international applicants. We are also seeing a lot of those, right? We have seeing a lot of those, right? We

have partners in the Latin market where the partners in the Latin market where the house delegates do the house systems house delegates do the house systems right policy makers in those countries right policy makers in those countries and then start thinking about okay what and then start thinking about okay what do we do well in the US perhaps some of do we do well in the US perhaps some of the solution can go there versus how are the solution can go there versus how are the other solution in other countries the other solution in other countries that can really bring to the US because that can really bring to the US because there's a proof of concept right so I there's a proof of concept right so I think that integrated process of us think that integrated process of us bringing together online communicated bringing together online communicated and some are able to all fly in right and some are able to all fly in right for a few days. Those are exciting for a few days. Those are exciting moment and for you guys are these moment and for you guys are these accelerator acceptes are also getting accelerator acceptes are also getting funding or mostly it's about helping funding or mostly it's about helping them to make sure the business them to make sure the business infrastructure and then actually helping infrastructure and then actually helping them to launch into the next phase. Yes, them to launch into the next phase. Yes, great question. So we provide a great question. So we provide a non-dilutive stipen for those who are non-dilutive stipen for those who are selected into our cohort and then selected into our cohort and then through the engagement with our through the engagement with our investors and we're an investor as well.

investors and we're an investor as well. We have seen investments coming out of We have seen investments coming out of the accelerator but there is not like the accelerator but there is not like the Y combinator model where we would the Y combinator model where we would you know expect initial investment with you know expect initial investment with participation in our accelerator and you participation in our accelerator and you know I I think there's pros and cons of know I I think there's pros and cons of course to to that approach but we really course to to that approach but we really focus on using the accelerator to make focus on using the accelerator to make those connections to go advance a pilot those connections to go advance a pilot or an inmarket project or insight that or an inmarket project or insight that really helps catalyze the path for these really helps catalyze the path for these startups and you know we've seen that um startups and you know we've seen that um we have many of those different case we have many of those different case studies over the past four years studies over the past four years >> that is such a critical point because >> that is such a critical point because many time when we talk to medical school many time when we talk to medical school or innovation hub that is their or innovation hub that is their challenge is people getting that pilot challenge is people getting that pilot started whether they're is their first started whether they're is their first one or their next one because at the end one or their next one because at the end of the day I was just on the investor uh of the day I was just on the investor uh uh round table earlier is that if we uh round table earlier is that if we don't see these innovation actually have don't see these innovation actually have users and a able to understand that users and a able to understand that language then they're not sellable and language then they're not sellable and if they're not sellable then they're not if they're not sellable then they're not vulnerable either. So giving those vulnerable either. So giving those opportunity how to present themselves opportunity how to present themselves how to actually get into a pilot get how to actually get into a pilot get those data started is really critical those data started is really critical for many of these startup like yourself for many of these startup like yourself sorry the accelerators like yourself be sorry the accelerators like yourself be able to help the startup to achieve. Now able to help the startup to achieve. Now what's next? What do you guys are what's next? What do you guys are looking for? anything that we wanted to looking for? anything that we wanted to celebrate or anything we're looking celebrate or anything we're looking forward to in the rest of the year?

forward to in the rest of the year?

Accelerate Program and Scaling Partnerships

>> Yeah, so we actually have another >> Yeah, so we actually have another program in addition to our accelerator program in addition to our accelerator called accelerate um that provides called accelerate um that provides additional non-dilutive funding to a additional non-dilutive funding to a startup and a partner who are advancing startup and a partner who are advancing a mission aligned project over a longer a mission aligned project over a longer time period. And so, exactly to your time period. And so, exactly to your point, once that match is made, you point, once that match is made, you know, the magic can really happen and know, the magic can really happen and the impact can be had, but sometimes it the impact can be had, but sometimes it takes more than, you know, a 12week takes more than, you know, a 12week accelerator to really advance that work accelerator to really advance

that work in a meaningful way that drives to, you in a meaningful way that drives to, you know, a commercial deal or an know, a commercial deal or an acquisition or a big funding round. And acquisition or a big funding round. And so we're very excited about continuing so we're very excited about continuing to grow our Accelerate program, to grow our Accelerate program, including opening it up not just to our including opening it up not just to our smile community, but also to other smile community, but also to other startups. We're also seeing tremendous startups. We're also seeing tremendous opportunity around medical dental opportunity around medical dental integration. And so continuing to integration. And so continuing to advance pilots with partners, you know, advance pilots with partners, you know, to really bridge mission and market to really bridge mission and market opportunities and making whole person opportunities and making whole person care not the exception, right? We're care not the exception, right? We're seeing pockets in the public and private seeing pockets in the public and private sector, but part of our mission is we sector, but part of our mission is we want to make this the norm.

want to make this the norm. >> Yeah, for sure. is how do we see things >> Yeah, for sure. is how do we see things as a default and not feel like oh let me as a default and not feel like oh let me ask more questions or we ask question ask more questions or we ask question because the curiosity to grow and expand because the curiosity to grow and expand instead of questioning of is that even a instead of questioning of is that even a valid idea with the accelerate are you valid idea with the accelerate are you guys looking for certain stage of guys looking for certain stage of companies that's the best sweet spot for companies that's the best sweet spot for other people to start thinking about it other people to start thinking about it >> yes so still we're focused on the early >> yes so still we're focused on the early emerging stage but our you know flexible emerging stage but our you know flexible depending again on the level of mission depending again on the level of mission alignment and the reach to our alignment and the reach to our underserved population. So I'd say underserved population. So I'd say there's openness from C to probably there's openness from C to probably series B.

series B. >> Amazing. And there's so many different >> Amazing. And there's so many different components of what we can do in the components of what we can do in the healthcare space. And for you guys is healthcare space. And for you guys is the front end driver of how do we have the front end driver of how do we have the dental medical integration and at the dental medical integration and at the end of the day it's about having the end of the day it's about having these collaborative conversation right these collaborative conversation right and we host a venture vitality and we host a venture vitality specifically in healthcare investors.

specifically in healthcare investors. other people has other angel squads, other people has other angel squads, right? Like in I think that's where we right? Like in I think that's where we needed to be, right? Like when we're needed to be, right?

Challenges in Oral Health Innovation

Like when we're able to be with our peers, be with other able to be with our peers, be with other people's doing similar thing or people's doing similar thing or different stages when bringing the different stages when bringing the insights, ideas and new creative ways to insights, ideas and new creative ways to see how do we actually work together see how do we actually work together instead of feeling like which a lot of instead of feeling like which a lot of our we all doing kind of the same thing our we all doing kind of the same thing with the same hope but isolated instead with the same hope but isolated instead of well let's just pull our research of well let's just pull our research together if you're doing something together if you're doing something similar. We were just talking about the similar. We were just talking about the impact award, right? Like there are so impact award, right? Like there are so many things that you guys are already many things that you guys are already doing. Hey, let us support it, right?

doing. Hey, let us support it, right? How do we bring the right people to you? How do we bring the right people to you? That's the power true collaboration, That's the power true collaboration, true interconnectability true interconnectability and introduction with intent become that and introduction with intent become that much more important. So anybody from the much more important. So anybody from the startup out there that you guys are startup out there that you guys are listening from leaders we want you to listening from leaders we want you to start talking with Katie with myself start talking with Katie with myself with other people that you see those with other people that you see those collaborative ideas with right and I collaborative ideas with right and I think it's also never too early to start think it's also never too early to start those conversation because you never those conversation

because you never know where the sparks are coming from.

know where the sparks are coming from. What do you see right now could be the What do you see right now could be the biggest challenges in innovative space biggest challenges in innovative space within oral health?

within oral health? >> Yes. Well, you know, funding continues >> Yes. Well, you know, funding continues to be a challenging environment. That's to be a challenging environment. That's why we've also looked at kind of some why we've also looked at kind of some creative constructs to continue to creative constructs to continue to catalyze work in this space and help the catalyze work in this space and help the startups, you know, prove out some of startups, you know, prove out some of these things and work on you know in these things and work on you know in March unlock next levels of funding. You March unlock next levels of funding. You know, I we're starting especially on know, I we're starting especially on medical dental integration some policy medical dental integration some policy and so there was big news with the 2026 and so there was big news with the 2026 Medicare physician fees a policy to Medicare physician fees a policy to recognize oral health quality recognize oral health quality improvement and care coordination. But improvement and care coordination. But there's still a long way to go in terms there's still a long way to go in terms of really advancing the incentives, the of really advancing the incentives, the infrastructure, the workflow to lay the infrastructure, the workflow to lay the foundation, right, for these innovative foundation, right, for these innovative startups to scale at the end of the day.

startups to scale at the end of the day. And so, you know, being able to help And so, you know, being able to help bridge that gap between dental and bridge that gap between dental and medical will create ultimately a bigger medical will create ultimately a bigger market and bigger reach. There's market and bigger reach. There's tremendous access issues across the tremendous access issues across the board where medical and dental board where medical and dental integration can also help solve, right?

integration can also help solve, right? We know 27 million Americans see a We know 27 million Americans see a dentist but not a physician. I think dentist but not a physician. I think that's a really interesting statistic that's a really interesting statistic and shows, you know, dental care can be and shows, you know, dental care can be an access point into our health care an access point into our health care system, but there's still, you know, system, but there's still, you know, more work to be done in terms of some of more work to be done in terms of some of that foundational layer to advance that foundational layer to advance multiple innovations at scale, multiple innovations at scale, >> right? is that there are people who are >> right?

Closing Thoughts and How to Connect

is that there are people who are so used to oh I get my care from the ER so used to oh I get my care from the ER I got my care by going to urgent care I got my care by going to urgent care because there's never established because there's never established primary physician or individualist and primary physician or individualist and then same thing there are more women go then same thing there are more women go to OBGYn than even going to primary care to OBGYn than even going to primary care right so dental is right in that right so dental is right in that category of how can we collectively have category of how can we collectively have a system of that referral system that a system of that referral system that people just not just say you should go people just not just say you should go to that provider but there's a direct to that provider but there's a direct connection and then eventually is what I connection and then eventually is what I always say we cannot build a castle on always say we cannot build a castle on top of sand. So how do we put the right top of sand. So how do we put the right blocks foundations so then when we have blocks foundations so then when we have innovation and layer into each other it innovation and layer into each other it become a big marketplace and then become a big marketplace and then solutions become interconnected and it solutions become interconnected and it doesn't feel like we are trying to run doesn't feel like we are trying to run when we barely can walk right so the when we barely can walk right so the eagerness of innovators we also needed eagerness of innovators we also needed to say okay it's not that we're asking to say okay it's not that we're asking you to slow down we're simply asking you you to slow down we're simply asking you to make sure you have what it need the to make sure you have what it need the right people the right operational right people the right operational infrastructure, the right legal support, infrastructure, the right legal support, the right financials and then the right the right financials and then the right go to market, your story, your messages.

go to market, your story, your messages. It need to be a collective way of seeing It need to be a collective way of seeing across the board of all 12 critical across the board of all 12 critical domain business and not feeling like oh domain business and not feeling like oh I should have been there yesterday, I should have been there yesterday, right? And those over excitement right? And those over excitement sometimes that's when even investors sometimes that's when even investors will look at it and we're like it will look at it and we're like it doesn't quite make sense, right? and doesn't quite make sense, right? and then you see more red flags than green then you see more red flags than green flags. So, we're so appreciative for you flags. So, we're so appreciative for you to be the champion of world health and to be the champion of world health and world health innovations. And there's a world health innovations. And there's a lot to be said and we definitely will lot to be said and we definitely will continue to support you, support each continue to support you, support each other at different events. Make sure to other at different events. Make sure to check out what Carequest is doing and if check out what Carequest is doing and if you are in the space of oral health you are in the space of oral health innovation, definitely reach out. So, innovation, definitely reach out. So, how do you believe is the best way for how do you believe is the best way for people to connect with you when they people to connect with you when they wanted to learn more?

wanted to learn more? >> Yes, please feel free reach out. You are >> Yes, please feel free reach out. You are always welcome to reach out to me always welcome to reach out to me directly. Have an amazing directly. Have an amazing multid-disiplinary team behind all of multid-disiplinary team behind all of our programs and work that we do at our programs and work that we do at CareQuest. And we're very active on the CareQuest. And we're very active on the conference scene. Always happy to meet conference scene. Always happy to meet in person as well. But, you know, in person as well. But, you know, whether you're a startup, be on the whether you're a startup, be on the lookout for Smile Health applications.

lookout for Smile Health applications. If you're a provider interested in If you're a provider interested in piloting some of this oral health or piloting some of this oral health or integrated health innovation, we would integrated health innovation, we would love to talk with you or other partners love to talk with you or other partners on the medical dental investor side on the medical dental investor side interested in this space. There's interested in this space. There's growing momentum and we are really growing momentum and we are really excited about the the year ahead.

excited about the the year ahead. >> Amazing. We appreciate everyone. So, >> Amazing. We appreciate everyone. So, make sure you comment below if you have make sure you comment below if you have thought about the medical dental thought about the medical dental integration. What's your idea? What are integration. What's your idea? What are you working on? Let us support you.

you working on? Let us support you. Until next time, thank you for Until next time, thank you for listening. Remember, the positive listening. Remember, the positive [music] change we're seeking starts [music] change we're seeking starts right here with me and you. If you're a right here with me and you. If you're a fan of the show or if you are just fan of the show or if you are just having struggles or success [music] that having struggles or success [music] that you're either experienced in the past or you're either experienced in the past or are experiencing now in the healthcare are experiencing now in the healthcare industry, these matter to all of us. I industry, these matter to all of us. I want to hear from you. Visit want to hear from you. Visit sabrinaarback.com/connect sabrinaarback.com/connect sabrinaarback.com/connect [music] [music] [music]