BioSpectrum
the business of Bio & Health Sciences
ASIA EDITION

Revolutionizing healthcare fundraising by matching early-stage startups with potential medical investors

October 12, 2022 | Opinion | By Hithaishi C Bhaskar

Chris Lee, Founder & CEO, Singapore-based VentureBlick "Breakthrough innovative funding platform designed to support early-stage healthcare startups through funding, de-risking, product validation, and market insights"



Chris Lee, Founder & CEO at Singapore based VentureBlick

Meaningful partnerships and collaborations are indispensable to narrow the disparities among stakeholders in a multifaceted startup ecosystem to stimulate healthcare innovations. Pandemic brought industries, investors and Healthcare practitioners (HCP) closer than ever before to uncover promising healthcare innovations. Healthcare ecosystem is looking out for more collaborative vision to connect incubators, collaborators, VCs and PEs, medical associations, and healthcare groups.

VentureBlick is a platform aiming to transform healthcare fundraising by matching early-stage healthcare startups, which are pre-screened by a team with deep domain expertise, with potential medical investors to leverage unparalleled value to startups. BioSpectrum Asia explored this breakthrough innovative funding platform dedicated to supporting early-stage healthcare startups through funding, de-risking, product validation, and market insights with **Chris Lee, Founder & CEO at Singapore based VentureBlick**.

- **How does VentureBlick assist early-stage healthcare startups in securing funds, product validation, and market insights?**

After 30 years in the healthcare industry, I found this gap between inventors and the market. There are a lot of good ideas out there that could improve healthcare for all, but many of these young startups die a natural death because there is not enough funding to sustain their product development journey, or because they couldn't find the right market fit for their products. Healthcare is very complex. It requires participation and support from different stakeholders for any new innovations to succeed.

In other words, VentureBlick is the only fundraising platform at present that equips healthcare startups with funding, market insights, and customer validation by matching them with medical investors. Using deep healthcare expertise, VentureBlick connects startups to the right people and the right resources, so they do things right in the shortest time possible. This will shorten the development cycle of healthcare innovations.

Medical professionals have the financial means and unique insights to support new inventions. The group exclusively include Physicians, clinicians, hospital administrators, or industry professionals with deep expertise in healthcare (e.g., health economists, payer executives, healthcare company executives, etc.).

Hence we created a platform and a community where healthcare startups can get early feedback, early buy-in, and early funding support from people who could be their eventual customers. VentureBlick connects the dots for everyone within the healthcare ecosystem with the simple goal of helping new innovations thrive. With the launch scheduled for early 2023, the novel platform connects healthcare stakeholders and is currently encouraging healthcare startups and investors to express their interest.

- **How do you strategically identify promising healthcare startups and their market opportunities? How comprehensive is VentureBlick in attracting both medical and non-medical investors?**

We will launch our open call for entries to the startup community later this year. In the meantime, we are looking to partner with healthcare incubators, accelerators, industry associations, and government agencies in various countries to identify the most promising healthcare startups out there.

As long as the startup has a product or solution for the healthcare industry and is looking for funding of up to $5 million, they can apply for our fundraising platform. This is open to all healthcare sectors from pharmaceuticals and biotech to medical devices, diagnostics, digital health, consumer health, animal health, and healthcare services.

Healthcare startups that apply will be systematically evaluated by our VentureBlick team and a team of external advisors with expertise covering different segments of the healthcare ecosystem before they are shortlisted and placed on the fundraising platform for medical investors to review, rate, and invest.

Once the startups have achieved a certain level of investment from medical investors, participation will be open to general investors – accredited investors, who are keen on investing in healthcare but do not have medical backgrounds. The unique mechanism provides additional access, enhances both quality and volume of investment, and also lowers transaction costs.

Medical investors - physicians, clinicians, and industry professionals benefit from VentureBlick's platform by investing in the latest healthcare innovations pre-screened by healthcare experts. It gives them an opportunity to share their insights and shape innovation within an industry they know best. Similarly, general investors benefit from a shortlist of healthcare startups whose ideas have been screened and validated by medical experts.

- **How is VentureBlick's proprietary model aid institutional investors in screening and de-risking startups before they collaborate with VCs or PEs?**

We are specifically focused on supporting healthcare startups at the early stage of their development. There are two things startups generally struggle with: how to get funding without losing focus on their product; and finding a way to test if the product they invented is really what their customers want. Startups in healthcare face even more challenges such as a higher barrier to market due to regulatory, quality, and clinical matters, longer development lead time requiring more rounds of funding, and the lack of commercialisation experience by founders.

Through our stringent screening process and the insights startups receive from the advisory board and medical investors, they will be in a better position to shape and adjust their products to cater to what the market needs. By doing so at this early stage, we set startups on the right path from the start, which should contribute to a higher rate of success and prepare them for later-stage development with VCs and PEs.

All the startup projects will have to reach a certain level of investment from medical investors before the fundraising is valid and open to non-medical investors. This itself is a main differentiator from other fundraising methods. And our healthcare community will provide on-going and specialised support to startups and nurture them together with stakeholders with different expertise.

- **How can a start-up founder secure funding with effective product validation and by optimising its resource management without diluting startup control?**

Our fundraising concept is different from that of VCs and PEs and typical angel funding, where founders usually need to give up a sizable percentage of equity to one or two lead investors. With VentureBlick, multiple investors are involved for every round of fundraising.

VentureBlick plays as an intermediary to pool the funds together into a special purpose vehicle and manage it on behalf of the investors. Each investor will hold only a small fraction of equity, which on its own will not be sufficient to influence control over the startups and cannot be exercised within a certain period of time.

This arrangement will be subject to the laws and regulations within each country we operate, but the idea is to raise funds while giving founders peace of mind to focus on their product in line with the vision they had.

- **How do you foresee prospects in the burgeoning APAC Healthcare startup ecosystem? What are the expansion and collaboration milestones ahead, esp for FY 22-23?**

VentureBlick already has a presence in Australia, Korea, Singapore, and the USA, and is focused on building our teams there towards our launch early next year. We are also working on establishing a presence in China and India by early next year. We believe those are the key markets that we should tap into and capitalise on the huge opportunities with the booming healthcare ecosystems there. In fact, having an international network will be one of the key differentiators of our business model. It will be beneficial for both investors and startups to broaden their reach, access, and impact.

We also plan to set up our own venture capital fund, the VB Healthcare Fund, to invest in promising healthcare startups that will help create synergies with our fundraising platform and the professional community. In the meantime, we are trying to find a creative solution by leveraging the latest technology to fundamentally solve the liquidity issue faced by all investors.

By Hithaishi C Bhaskar