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WHX Tech 2025 wraps up with focus on agnostic AI and femtech as startup Strolll crowned Xcelerate champion

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Strolll, creator of revolutionary all-in-one digital therapeutic software solution for AR glasses, wins inaugural Xcelerate Champion of Innovation Award to claim US$50,0000 prize Dr Waheed Arian relays his journey from warzone to wellbeing entrepreneur as healthtech helps displaced populations; Saudi female doctor to roll out AI cameras that detect glaucoma and Alzheimer's



As the doors closed on the inaugural edition of WHX Tech, the three-day platform for digital health innovation that took place this week at Dubai World Trade Centre, conversations continued across the three stages on the future of digital health. Additionally, the winner of the region's first digital health start-up competition was announced, taking home a US$50,000 prize to support the next growth phase in their business.

As exhibitors and stakeholders begin to fully recognise the impact WHX Tech has had, Atif Albraiki, Chief Digital & AI Officer at Dubai Health, a key partner of the event, expressed how WHX Tech has enabled collaboration between the industry ecosystem to drive innovation. “Participating in the inaugural WHX Tech 2025 has been an opportunity to demonstrate how we, at Dubai Health, are harnessing digital innovation and artificial intelligence to reimagine the way care is delivered. By showcasing initiatives such as smart hospital rooms, AI-enabled pain management, and intelligent medical records, we are translating technology into smarter, more personalised experiences for patients.

“Equally important has been the chance to strengthen and expand our collaborations with leading academic, technology, and government partners. These partnerships reflect the mission of our integrated academic health system — driving innovation in healthcare delivery while advancing education and research. Together, they enable us to accelerate progress and build solutions that will shape the future of health in Dubai and beyond.”

Displaced Populations and Femtech Focus on Final Day of WHX Tech

With more than 200 expert speakers and 300 exhibitors taking part across the three-day event, a panel discussion on the Xcelerate Stage focused on the challenges and opportunities for digital health in supporting displaced populations. Dr

Waheed Arian, an Afghanistan-born British medic, shared his personal experience of displacement and the importance of personalised, culturally sensitive healthcare.

As a child living in a refugee camp in Pakistan, Arian contracted tuberculosis, malaria, and suffered malnutrition, receiving treatment from a volunteer doctor. This first-hand experience of the power of medicine inspired him to dedicate his life to healing others. After moving to the UK aged 15, he studied medicine at both Cambridge University and Harvard before founding Arian Wellbeing, a platform that delivers accessible, clinically led support for populations facing complex trauma, adversity, and health inequalities.

Speaking of the need for “agnostic tools” and devices “secure from adverse governments”, Arian said there is a necessity to address basic needs and leverage technology to enhance healthcare services for displaced individuals: “We provide culturally-sensitive, language-appropriate mental health services as an innovative digital health solution, but it really looks at each individual to see what problem they have. In the case of displaced people, they have experienced a lot of trauma, whether it's before, during, or after their migration journey, so we map that and connect them through an expert via video call, audio call, or text, providing them the support they need.”

On the same stage, equality remained on the agenda with a session focussed on how women are rewriting the rules of health innovation and investment. Sally Ann Frank, the Global Lead in Health and Life Sciences at Microsoft for Startups, provided examples of how AI is changing the game for women’s health, be it a breast cancer detection camera with AI, biometric screening direct from a smartphone, or remote ophthalmology surgery. “The access problem is something that AI is going to be really good at solving,” she said.

Fellow panelist Dr Professor Selwa A F Al-Hazzaa, CEO & Founder of SDM, a health-tech startup, also told the story of how she scaled her screening capacities by initially offering the service for free. She started by approaching the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Health during the COVID-19 pandemic and stressing that diabetes was killing three times as many people as COVID. This led to her being able to put diabetes detection cameras into remote areas across the Kingdom. “The patient walks in, gets the photo taken, and within literally two minutes, they will get two reports,” she said, adding that SDM has now gathered 500,000 images and finished 35,000 free exams with almost 97 per cent sensitivity.

“The reason we had it free is that to improve your solution, you need images. If you sell it, they're not going to give you the images, so we went to the charity centres, and what we got in return was images. We just finished diabetic retinopathy; now we’re going to glaucoma. We’re also going to, by looking into the eye, detect atrial fibrillation, strokes, and Alzheimer's. So it's by these images that we can make the solution. And we are localising because while, of course, we're using the expertise of international talent, they are mentors – it's localisation that makes a country grow.”

Digital Health Start-Up Competition, Xcelerate, Crowns a Winner

The inaugural edition of Xcelerate, the region's largest start-up competition dedicated to digital health, crowned its first winner on the last day of WHX Tech. Forty high-potential start-ups have pitched their solutions this week with the hope of becoming one of the 12 finalists invited to take to the stage on day three to present their solutions to a judging panel of international investors and industry leaders – including *Dragons’ Den UK* entrepreneur and investor, Peter Jones.

The Xcelerate Champion of Innovation Award, which came with a US$50,000 prize cheque, went to Strolll, a revolutionary all-in-one digital therapeutic software solution for commercially available augmented reality (AR) glasses. Speaking after the win, Jorgen Ellis, CEO and Co-Founder of Strolll, said the win “means so much to our team”.

“We have people all around the world who are working so hard every single day to bring our solution to more people who need neurorehabilitation, and I know the whole team at Strolll is going to be so thankful,” he added. “It is a huge validation of the hard work that we're all putting in. WHX Tech has been an amazing experience for us. We just expanded into the region one week ago, and this win, along with the industry connections we have made at the event over the past three days, is a great start to a new market for us.”

The first of the two recognition awards went to UK-based éclateral, who won the ‘Xceptional Patient-Centric Innovation Award’ for its o~pal portable solution for rapid health testing, disease detection, and preventative screening. Meanwhile, the ‘Xtraordinary Early Stage Start Up Award’ was given to US-based You(th) Healthtech, for its AI algorithm smartphone technology that can extract photoplethysmographic signals from a video of a user’s face, captured via the camera of a smartphone, to measure vital signs such as heart rate, oxygen saturation, respiratory rate, blood pressure, and stress levels.

Commenting on the success of WHX Tech 2025, Sally Thompson, Group Event Director, Informa Markets, said: “Being able to see the winner crowned of the region's largest digital health start-up competition as we close the doors on WHX Tech’s inaugural edition was a great ending to a fantastic three days. Having spent a great deal of time speaking with not just start-ups, but innovators, digital health tech futurists, and companies who are pushing the boundaries of health tech integration, it's clear that WHX Tech offers a much-needed platform to come together and deliberate what comes next in this exciting industry.”

WHX Tech is held in strategic partnership with the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), reinforcing its credibility and ensuring that its content aligns with the sector’s most pressing priorities.

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