

A Star is Born!

Moment Health came into this world last October. Six months on and its baby steps are leaving quite the footprint. The founder, Belfast born Nuala Murphy talks to Silicon Valley Global

It was burgeoning entrepreneur Nuala Murphy who gave birth to Moment Health at the same time as the skies above Ireland were pregnant with Storm Ophelia. Ireland has recovered from its first hurricane, but Nuala Murphy's whirlwind year continues unabated! Indeed, on the basis of the reception so far afforded Murphy's start-up, one would be advised not to hold one's breath waiting for tech youngster Moment Health to disappear from the radar anytime soon.

The world of technology is intensely competitive but Moment Health appears to have the X factor and all the ingredients required to thrive and prosper. Certainly, it has emerged onto the scene with a tick in almost every box: At least that's what nine out of ten besotted parents say; both the expectant and the new.

Simply said, Moment Health aims to prioritize Maternal Mental Health and provide new parents with the tools and knowledge they need to sustain good mental wellbeing, from pregnancy through to parenthood.

"My passion is to make maternal mental health mainstream, and to normalize it; to let mums and parents know they're not going mad, they are suffering from a treatable illness and where and when to seek help," Murphy told SVG.

Moment Health's CEO sees technology as the perfect vehicle to deliver support to improve – and even save – the lives of new parents. Like the most potent of storms, Moment Health isn't hanging about in making an impact as it seeks to connect mothers and new parents with the tools and knowledge they need to sustain good mental health.

With quicksilver movement, the company has already gone international with its suite of easy-to-use and inclusive tools easing the burden for a whole generation of new parents.

Moment Health's mission has been fine-tuned with surgical precision, resulting in its easy to follow website (www.momenthealth.io), and an innovative app, which features a mental health symptom checker, an emotional diary to track moods and identify triggers, as well as a directory of local support services.

The Moment Health app, developed with clinicians and healthcare professionals, screens for perinatal, postnatal and associated anxieties, and includes additional features

Maternal Mental Health research shows that at least 20 per cent of women and 10 per cent of men are diagnosed with symptoms of anxiety or depression during pregnancy or early parenthood.

such as a helpful guide to practical and accessible coping strategies.

The company's founder is quite clearly a woman on a mission to help mothers and their nearest and dearest. The genesis of her journey to founder and CEO of Moment Health takes us back to her twenties when work experience with some high-profile commercial companies across Europe gave her very valuable professional skills, building on the degree she earned in applied languages and linguistics from the University of Manchester Institute of Science & Technology and a semester in the prestigious Universite de Geneve.

A graduate position with a company based in Northern Ireland saw her hone her business skills even further. Building relationships was her forte while energy, and a zest for life, were her calling card. In double-quick time, Nuala Murphy became the focus of many a head hunter with Unicorn's loss being Ulster Carpets' gain at one stage, followed by a [professionally] life-changing move into medical technology in 2006.

A beast of a software company with tentacles in the US and the UK, it was in this role that Murphy became engaged in heading up product marketing, building a team brand and the marketing function and helping the company make inroads into the healthcare sector.

"It was at that stage I began to get a real insight into the healthcare industry, how

products should be developed < ultimately listening to the frontline staff and all key stakeholders to ascertain what we all now call "product market fit"> and brought to market," Nuala explains.

"That kind of experience was instrumental in leading me down the path to what I'm doing now from a woman's health point of view and as a young mother myself. Understanding the problem from all angles first before attempting to solve it has been a huge part of our journey to date".

A brief dalliance in the world of start-ups afforded the would-be Moment Health boss a valuable insight into the business of sentiment analysis. At the same time, she walked the tightrope between career, pregnancy and raising two young children, and says she experienced the stresses and strains of pregnancy and wondered what happens if a mother doesn't get the level of care I was lucky to have received?

"I also experienced the angst of a mother going back to work, which when juxtaposed against my work, revealed this huge societal issue of maternal mental health and the possible need for supports beyond what already existed.

Leaving her start-up days (as an employee) behind her, and with encouragement from friends and family, she began to actively explore the possibility of planting the seeds from which Moment Health would germinate.

"My background is in marketing, I am a chartered marketer and google squared accredited (Nuala completed her digital marketing course online on her second maternity leave and graduated with distinction) it was this that helped me get in shape to go and talk to people about my idea," Nuala adds.

"I connected with researchers, with health professionals, with technologists and – most importantly – with women, who were universally telling me "we need this, we needed this"

Nuala Murphy found the 'need' as described in anecdotal evidence, was clearly backed up by statistics and academic testimony. For example, that as many as 20 per cent of women and 10 per cent of men suffer depression or anxiety during the perinatal period; that one in four women



suffer maternal mental ill health during pregnancy; and that almost a quarter of women who died between six weeks and one year after pregnancy died from mental health related causes – the more apparent it becomes that there is a great need for improved intervention and availability of treatment, not just here but on a global scale.

“There’s three times in a woman’s life when they have physiological changes that can affect their mood and that’s puberty, pregnancy and menopause.

But it’s very important to point out that when it comes to parenting it doesn’t discriminate. It can come upon anyone at any time.”

Bringing such mental health issues into the mainstream, getting them fully debated and acquiring greater recognition for them is one of the drivers of Moment Health.

“That’s why we established this business. That’s why I have partnered with leading academics and technologists and experts in this field. Its why the Moment Health Board and advisory team consists of individuals who have built and scaled tech companies, brought technology products into the healthcare

sector with product design and UX being central to our vision. (Sarah Friar CFO of Square, Board Member Slack/Walmart is a big supporter of Nuala’s mission and has become a mentor to Nuala and the Company on this journey and Sheryl Sandberg’s Foundation and Initiative Lean In of which Nuala is one of the most well known and respected Leaders which saw her earn the role as host last year in the first Lean In European community event)

Ultimately that’s why our early stage investors TechStartNI the local arm of Pentech Ventures along with Invest Northern Ireland have understood our vision and bought into it.

With Moment Health, my goal is to facilitate meeting that need for mothers and empower sufferers and their families. It’s about using the power of technology to tackle maternal mental health and improve accessibility to services that parents – mums and dads – suffering depression or anxiety from any stage during pregnancy onwards so crucially need and deeply deserve. Anyone suffering from maternal ill health anywhere in the world deserves the opportunity to

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realize they’re not going mad; that they are experiencing a treatable illness they can recover from. Once they know that, it’s about showing people where and how to get help. Already we see the app is working and will be publishing internationally on this this year.”

“We believe we can greatly heighten awareness of mental health issues to not only mothers and their families, employers and society at large through our communication tools and through our alliance or partnerships with different global organizations.

We are also close to launching our corporate offering, where Moment Health can be incorporated into an organization’s own wellness program, or it can be offered as a standalone support tool. Our products have the potential to pre-empt absences and speed up recovery by connecting parents with the support they need for long-term recovery. This will see us truly making maternal mental health mainstream”.

Given access to networks to the investment community and other entrepreneurs in the female health sector, no one could possibly bet against Moment Health not delivering on its vision.

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- ▶ Athletics Ireland Partnership
- ▶ Life Saving Skills, CPR
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