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Q&A with Dr. Kim Chilman-Blair, Founder and President of Medicine X using Educational Stories to enable Patients to Learn, Relate and Interact with Medical Content in Terminology and Language they can Understand

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CEOCFO: *Dr. Chilman-Blair, would you tell us the vision behind Medicine X?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: The vision behind Medicine X is to create a way to explain medical information to patients, without using the medical mumbo jumbo that doctors normally speak—meaning, to be able to explain complicated medical concepts to patients through storytelling in a way that they can understand. When I started off as a doctor many years ago, I found that most patients did not understand the diseases, treatments and information I would give them about what was happening inside their bodies. This is mainly because patients did not, and still do not, have the tools to be able to understand the medical terminology. When I was speaking to patients trying to explain how the condition is effecting their body, you can see the confusion as their eyes glaze over. It became obvious that doctors needed to be able to talk to their patients in a language they can understand while explaining difficult content.

CEOCFO: *Shouldn't doctors have figured this out long ago?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: Doctors have started to recognize that this is a problem, and the whole notion of a “patient-centric approach” is quite a new thing that is being talked about in medical circles. People have noticed that the language doctors use and the language patients use are completely different, so it is at the forefront of everyone’s mind. In addition, patients are becoming more like consumers these days. In the past, your doctor would tell you something and you would do whatever they said, (they were almost god-like figures), but these days it is not like that at all. People can look up information about a drug or treatment online, or they can go to blogs and patient forums to have discussions with other patients. There is a lot more information available to them, and I think that this in turn has put pressure on doctors to be able to explain what is going on in a “better” way than was expected in the past.

CEOCFO: *What have you created?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: Medicine X created a digital experience for patients to learn, understand, relate and interact with medical content in their own language—a series of educational stories, private Facebook support groups and educational emails. We use the power of story to explain different diseases to patients. For example, we just launched a story on diabetic gastroparesis, DG Xplained, which is a complication of diabetes in which the stomach’s ability to empty slows down. The nerve that talks to the stomach gets destroyed by uncontrolled high blood sugars leading to undigested food inside the stomach that does not get emptied into the small intestines as quickly as it is supposed to. It is quite a rare complication of diabetes that not many people talk about or know about. Rather than trying to explain all the complicated medical information, we explain it with a story of a real live patient—in this example, Stacie—who is going through the journey of having diabetes and slowly experiencing the symptoms of nausea and bloating. The story then goes into the body and explains what is happening. According to our research, patients are much more likely to read the story and

understand it through a similar narrative to their own. When each patient reaches the end of the story, they have learned and understand more information before they started, without even meaning to.

CEOFCO: *How do doctors present the stories?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: Every story is hosted within its own website, and doctors can let their patients know that these stories exist. They can go online and find them, and it is all absolutely free to anyone who has the condition or who wants to learn more. It is not just for the patients but family members, friends and caregivers to help them understand what is going on in the patient's body and what they are experiencing emotionally.

CEOFCO: *What is your business model?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: We work through a sponsorship model, so we find people within the medical industry who are willing to sponsor one of these stories so that they can be made available to the general public at no cost. Sponsors provide funding as way to support the community of patients and their families.

CEOFCO: *As you created more and more stories, what have you learned about how to present information?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: I think it is not a one-size-fits-all approach. We work with a focus group of patients who have each disease so a story that works for explaining Crohn's disease might be completely different from the story that we use to explain migraine. It is about getting to know the patient, the nuances of each particular condition and getting feedback to see what we can modify to make it the most relevant and get the right tone for that specific audience.

"Medicine X created a digital experience for patients to learn, understand, relate and interact with medical content in their own language—a series of educational stories, private Facebook support groups and educational emails."- Dr. Kim Chilman-Blair

CEOFCO: *Is there a particular length?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: There is a lot of information in each story, so it is something patients should spend time reading. The great thing about it is that they are interactive. There is the story along the top level, but if you do not understand a particular piece of anatomy or a word, you can learn more medical information within a clickable pop-up. There are levels of learning and understanding, so patients can read it along the top level and get a general idea of it, but then click in and go down a rabbit hole of learning more and more about a particular topic. It is only around 24 pages in length and it is all digital, but then depending on the information patients wish to digest *now*, you can go back and refer to it later as well.

CEOFCO: *Do men tend to pay more attention to stories about men? Does gender and perhaps age matter?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: The reader is going to identify with the person in the story much more if they are a male and it is a male character or if they are a female and it is a female character. What we try to do with our stories, especially as we are growing, is gathering more than one personal story in order for people to identify with it across the board—unless it is something particular like prostate cancer, in which the main character would be a man. We try to bring in more than one character so that people can identify with *somebody* within the story.

CEOFCO: *What might be different for the Australian audience and the US audience?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: They are so completely different, and I think the way people approach the disease journey is different. The tone, the characters and the way the information is presented is just different. You cannot just take an American story and disseminate it to an Australian audience. There are so many subtle nuances about the way that it is written.

CEOFCO: *Would you give us an example?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: For example, if you were putting a product or message into an Asian country, it could be offensive or mean something completely different in another part of the world. We have to rewrite every story and not just translate it, but "trans-create" it, meaning creating it specifically for a particular audience based on their culture and language—especially when incorporating humor. Humor does not translate across cultures, because the subtleties and what is funny in one culture might be completely misunderstood in another. We trans-create every story so that the medical information is the same, but the packaging is different.

CEOFCO: *How do you deal with some of the questionable aspects of information?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: Our whole initiative is doctors to patients. We are a group of physicians and artists that create these stories for patients. With that medical hat on, we deliver the most up-to-date medical information proven in medical literature. This is helpful for patients because there is so much misinformation out there, particularly, Dr. Google. Patients

will write in to us and ask what we think about something they have read on the internet (about autism for example), and we respond, “well this is what has been shown in scientific research.” We give them the current medical recommendations in a language they can digest.

CEO CFO: *How do you decide which conditions to tackle?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: It is a combination of getting feedback from patients and finding sponsorship. The patients write in everyday asking if we can cover this or that condition, so it is really driven by the patients themselves. We also go out and find a sponsor, so the resource is free to these patients and we can operate internally.

CEO CFO: *Why pay attention to Medicine X and why is what you are doing so important?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: In addition to explaining medical information through storytelling, we have created a whole series of private communities on Facebook where people can interact with patients like themselves and also, ask our in-house doctors questions via the Facebook closed network. This allows them to ask questions and receive feedback from physicians in real-time about the disease. Medicine X now has over 100 different private Facebook communities securely monitored by physicians. We are starting to educate patients across the board by helping them to understand the first major part of the condition, but then to be able to help them through any further questions.

CEO CFO: *What if anything might people miss or misunderstand about Medicine X?*

Dr. Chilman-Blair: We have had patients writing in every day about how much our stories and groups have helped them in their journey and understanding their condition. I cannot count the number of times we have received emails saying how patients have had a disease for twenty years or so, and through all the consultants that they have spoken to they have not had great understanding until now. They feel empowered and educated. That is the resounding feedback that we get, and it is amazing for us and very humbling to have that kind of feedback from patients every day.