

# A TALE OF TWO ENGINEERS

From Trichy to Tiptur, and Technology to Healthcare



Dusmant Kumar Pati and Shrinath Honnavalli

In the December of 2018, Dusmant Kumar Pati and Shrinath Honnavalli, batchmates who graduated from NIT Tiruchirapalli with degrees in Computer Science and Engineering in 1999, decided to set up rural health clinics in three village clusters in Karnataka.

As Pati put it, “We had both done 20 years of corporate life in leading companies. There are a lot of issues to be solved. Yes, we were contributing in our own way but you do not often see the end-results of your work in large set-ups. We thought, if not now, when do we take the plunge and do something of our own and make an impact?”

That attempt from Trawello Healthcare failed, but it led them to launch HealthyKid. The new venture won the ‘Ten Minute Million’ contest and got them Rs.16 lakh in funding at IIT Bombay’s Entrepreneurship Summit in January 2020. With good reason.





A child taking up an audiometry test at a school.

In the earlier attempt, they had picked Honnavalli village, from where Shrinath's gets his surname, and two villages in Tiptur Taluk. For the uninitiated, Tiptur is 150 kilometres to the west of Bengaluru that borders Tamil Nadu, and about 240-odd kilometers before one reaches Mangalore on the coastline. The engineers wanted to deliver affordable and accessible healthcare to villagers. The business case too made a lot of sense. On average, the locals were spending Rs. 200 or Rs. 250 to seek treatment in a nearby town, incurring cost of travel and also forgoing their daily wages. If one could use technology to provide treatment in their own village at Rs.100, it would solve their problem and if the volumes were decent, would also be viable. What they got right was the model. They engaged a doctor to provide primary healthcare at the villages. The doctor would move from one village to another, covering all three. If there was a complication, they would go the tele-medicine route to seek help. Each village cluster had a population of around 10,000, estimates Honnavalli.

But the social entrepreneurs who quit the comforts of their corporate jobs in their early 40s, got one small assumption wrong. Against an expected 40 to 50 patients a day, the number visiting the clinic consistently hovered around 20.

"The idea was to expand after the first set of villages but it didn't turn out as expected. It was a running business, but we were incurring losses everyday. We had both given up corporate jobs and really wanted to

make this work. We saw that with less patients, the doctor was free. So we thought, why don't we go to a school? That's how HealthyKid started off," explains Honnavalli.

Some of the larger schools in the town said they would try it out. HealthyKid is now a healthy business on the threshold of taking off on scale.

### Technology For Healthcare

"When we were able to bring in elements like health records, IoT devices and the like, we also felt closer to our technical background," he admits. That sense of adding value using technology didn't just add to the comfort levels of the founders, it also differentiated the offering. So what does HealthyKid do? It uses technology to bring affordable and quality healthcare to school, starting with screening. In other words, it helps monitor health of students on multiple parameters using between 40 to 50 non-invasive testing methods, including gamified apps.

"Usually, there is a reluctance among students when it comes to health check-ups. We have built these apps to make sure the kids are not scared, but actually enjoy the check-up and are excited to be part of it. Today we have five schools who are paying customers and we screened about 1,500 kids last year," adds Honnavalli.

There are an estimated 2 crore kids with preventable diseases in India, he quotes, outlining the purpose of HealthyKid's existence. The total school-going kids'





*A colour blindness test using technology without human intervention.*

population is pegged at 25 to 30 crores. Therein lies the opportunity.

The three-member start up team is on the lookout for developers and other staff ahead of the academic year starting June 2020. The target is to reach 15 to 20 schools and through them 10,000 to 15,000 children this year. Verbal confirmations are in and official ones awaited from 12 schools already, reveals Honnavalli.

That should keep the duo busy. For a school with 1000 kids, it takes a panel of doctors, dentists, nurses and technicians three to four days to finish the screening. This entails working with each school to weave this into their academic calendar. Reports are generated in 15 days and doctor-parent counselling is offered for kids who need attention. HealthyKid also offers health seminars engaging kids, parents and teachers.

Most importantly, while the school gets a summary report at the end of the year, the individual child's data belongs only to the parents. Their consent is also sought before the tests.

One would gauge that the response has been positive for some key reasons: non-invasive nature of the screening, data protection, gamified testing methods and also the affordability. It costs around Rs 250 per

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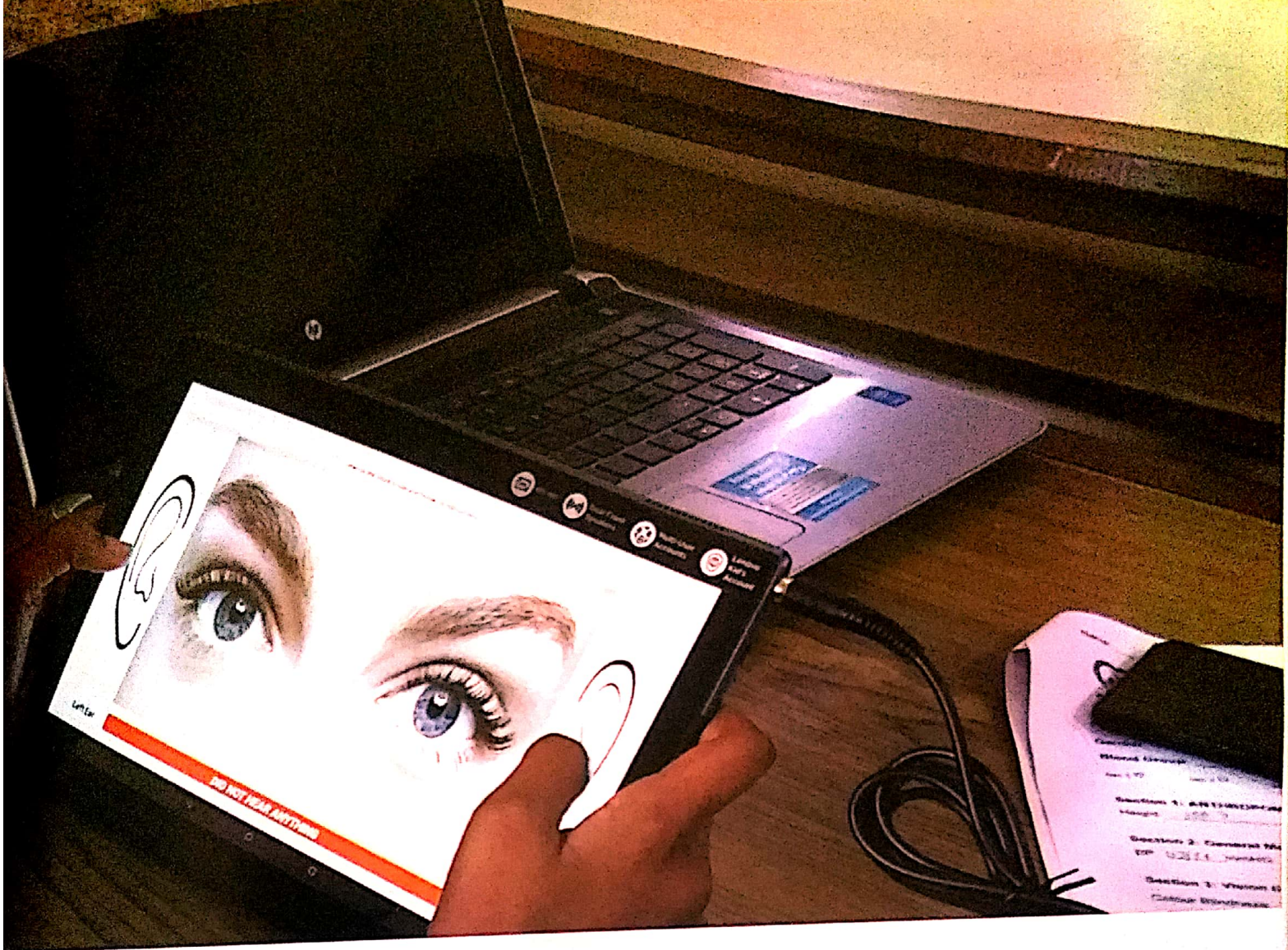
**- SHRINATH HONNAVALLI**

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child for screening and Rs.250 more for counseling where required. The margins, at 25 to 30 per cent, are healthy. But isn't there competition aplenty in the space of health check-ups?

“The market is huge. All put together, we have reached only a very, very small number. Also, we have competition but they are not too much into technology. That becomes a differentiator,” explains Honnavalli.





who plays COO while Pati dons the co-founder and CEO role. "The technology is hidden, the process is simplified for the kid. We don't even let the kid talk to the doctor until the check-ups are done," he adds.

For some of the tests, there is no manual intervention, and the data is entered automatically as the child engages with the gamified app. Even storage of this data is becoming an opportunity. The engineers are also being asked by schools which have an in-house doctor, to build a software that can store medical records securely.

The catchment is private schools with CBSE, ICSE and international curriculums. With its current offering, the current academic year will see HealthyKid staying focused on South Karnataka. Expansion into Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana is on the cards in the next academic year. The expansion envisioned though, is not just geographic.

### Non-Invasive Devices

Having invested Rs.10 lakh thus far, the duo believe the time is right now for expansion. Their confidence comes from market feedback and also recognition at forums like the IIT Bombay E-Summit. They now believe they have an MVP (minimum viable product)

that can be scaled. To that end, routes to expansion are being studied.

"We are continuously evaluating the use of AI, ML and Data Analytics to better the offering. We are also working on our own non-invasive devices and related research closely with institutions of higher learning," states Honnavalli.

Trawello Healthcare is working with its founders' alma mater NIT Trichy on the devices front. It is also engaged with MS Ramiah Medical College and Hospital for research and NIMHANS in Bengaluru specifically on mental health.

With paying customers in for HealthyKid and a profitable working model in place, Honnavalli believes they are better placed to seek investment now, as they did garnering the highest bid at the IIT competition. One of the factors considered by the veteran team of investors, some of whom have partnered the 'Ten Minute Million' since its inception five years ago, was the chemistry of the team. They couldn't agree more that a friendship forged on campus in '94 would be hard to outdo. For the batchmates who went different ways on tech careers in '98, Trawello is promising to be a healthy and lasting reunion. **S**