

## Ernst comes full circle with Treato

**T**reato, the Israeli health social media company, is coming to the US. The firm, which collects what it calls “patient voice” intelligence from across the web, is opening an office in Princeton, and one of its first US hires has been Ezra Ernst, the former head of CME for both Medscape and United Health Group.

While Ernst was at Medscape, the company’s medical unit revenues grew from \$80 million to \$120 million. A highlight was the portal’s contract with the CMS, in conjunction with the White House, to offer physician and consumer education around the Affordable Care Act, for which he got to rub elbows with the likes of ACA architects like Zeke Emanuel and Nancy-Ann DeParle. (“The changes that are rolling out now—this is the end result of that work,” he says.)

Ernst spent the last several years steeped in professional med ed. But “the patient was always central in my mind,” he says, “and CME became a tool to reach that patient.” The common thread: outcomes. “CME as a movement and educational tool is bringing more than just the doctor to the table...HCP-patient conversations are core.”

In the vein of patient empowerment, he says, he “gravitated to trying to understand what patient needs are, and Treato affords me an opportunity to look at the patient population in a way that’s different and unique.”

Ernst is part of a team charged with demonstrating to stakeholders the value of Treato’s technology. “Everyone wants the voice of the patient, but that’s hard to get in a way that makes sense and is actionable,” he says. “We bring that to them in real time, in massive scale.”

If CME helped him understand the HCP-patient

**“Everyone wants the voice of the patient, but that’s hard to get in a way that makes sense and is actionable”**

### Ezra Ernst

Chief commercial officer, Treato

#### 2008–2013

SVP/GM, Medscape

#### 2007–2008

President, Optum Health Education

#### 2005–2007

CEO, Swets Information Services

dynamic, Ernst’s background with medical journal publishers like Lippincott and online medical information platforms like Ovid Technologies groomed him for the technological aspect of his new job.

Treato.com monitors over 2,500 public forums for user-generated conversations—in 13,000 conditions ranging from depression and diabetes to cystic fibrosis and CLL—plus about three million or so visitors coming to the site each month. Those who come can access data online about others with their condition.

Last year, after five years of R&D, the firm released a commercial product, Treato Pharma, which is designed to generate insights by aggregating more than 1.5 billion caregiver and patient conversations. It does that by mapping the unfettered posts to drug databases, medical ontologies (think ICD9) and Treato’s own patient knowledge base to parse the content and glean intelligence.

“How you make sense of that massive amount of big data’ is the trick,” he says. Then again, from an early age, Ernst was pulling back the curtain and immersing himself in the nuts and bolts of healthcare.

He hails from a publishing family on his mother’s side—his maternal grandfather was a prolific mystery writer in the ’50s, and his mother had a career in publishing—and MDs on his father’s side.

His paternal grandfather was a GP in rural South Jersey, and Ernst’s father, who started as a pulmonologist, would practice in the South Bronx. “So HIV/AIDS for him in the ’80s was his entire patient population,” Ernst recalls.

He and his siblings used to visit their dad at South Bronx Lebanon Hospital. “Some of us would put on his lab coat. We’d check off that we visited a room. We were cheering up patients. In the ’80s in the South Bronx, they needed to be cheered up. It made a lasting impression.”

Making rounds with his father, he says, “brought home to me both the dark side of medicine... and the bright side: as you develop new technology and drugs, you can make a difference.”

Ernst was born in Israel (his dad attended med school in Tel Aviv) and moved to the States when he was four. Coming to Treato, he adds, “has been a full circle for me.”

Ernst and his psychologist wife were drawn to South Jersey when he was chief executive at Swets Information Services, based in Runnemede. Today they and their three children live in Moorestown, NJ. “We fell in love with the town,” he says. — Marc Iskowitz



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