

Familiar face named CEO of this Nashville startup

May 18, 2017, 12:18pm CDT

Preferral, a Nashville-based startup that aims to simplify physician referrals, has named James Aylward as its new CEO.

Preferral is a web-based application for managing and scheduling patient referrals between doctors. Unlike competitor ZocDoc, which allows patients to schedule appointments with specialists online, Preferral connects physicians offices and is not for individuals.

Founder and now Chief Technology Officer Jon Gautsch said more than 40 percent of specialist referrals go unscheduled, an issue that's costing physicians big dollars.

Though the company has only a few local investors, one is Harry Jacobson's TriStar Health Partners. Aylward said he expects the nascent company will seek more formal investments in three to six months. Aylward said he hopes to take the company, which has been focused on product development since its formation in 2014, to market.

"We feel pretty strongly that we've got something that we're ready to bring to the health care market," Aylward said.

The company currently has three employees, but Aylward said they will soon begin hiring a sales team.

Success for Preferral would bolster the city's ranks of health-tech companies. Observers have pointed to the health-tech industry as one Nashville needs to have a strong presence in if it is to maintain its status as a major health care hub.

This is the third local technology company Aylward has led. Aylward previously saw Brentwood-based health care technology firm MedCenterDisplay purchased by Cincinnati-based PatientPoint. Before that, he led Brentwood-based Sy.Med Development Inc. through its 2012 sale to Nashville-based HealthStream.

Aylward said he believes Preferral will also be acquired after its product goes to market.

"I firmly believe if we execute and market this, it's a natural byproduct to be acquired," Aylward said. "[Referral issues are] a huge nationwide problem."



COURTESY OF MEDCENTERDISPLAY
Jim Aylward is CEO of Preferral.

Emily Overholt

Reporter

Nashville Business Journal



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