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Capital Business

## MedStar Health wants to convert medical innovations into moneymakers



Steve Kinsey and Jodi Barth (Lennart Andresen)

By [Steven Overly](#) December 21, 2014

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Physical therapists **Jodi Barth** and **Gincy Stezar** had been treating patients with partial facial paralysis for years when an idea struck. They could rig mirrors so that the unimpaired side of a patient's face is reflected twice. The patient could then work on exercises to help reclaim muscle memory and function. It's an approach that has been used successfully to treat patients after limb amputations.

The pair built the early version of the Mirror Book using materials one can find at Home Depot. That's when they teamed with Barth's

former employer, MedStar Health, which recently created its Institute for Innovation to commercialize the medical inventions its clinicians create. Stephen Kinsey, a Cleveland Clinic employee who is based at MedStar as part of a partnership between the hospitals, helped Barth and Stezar convert the concept into a tablet app that uses an iPad camera rather than mirrors. The initial version of Face2Face debuted earlier this month.

*How did you conceive the initial idea to use a mirror image of the face to treat patients with Bell's palsy and other facial disorders?*

**Jodi Barth:** Most people in the medical community will say there's really nothing that can be done for this. "You'll either get better or you won't, but be thankful it's not cancer." I hate to be so gallant about it, but that is what our patients hear.

Taking patients that have facial palsy and putting them in front of a mirror is the last thing they want to do. They don't want to look at themselves. So they wouldn't work on those exercises because they wouldn't want to look in the mirror.

[The mirroring technique was originally] developed for patients with chronic pain syndrome or phantom limb pain after an amputation. Why can't we take something like that and do it for the face? We went through 20 or 30 different renditions to find mirrors that we could tape together so the patient only sees the noninvolved side reflected.

*How did you get from a physical product to an application for tablets?*

**Barth:** The Mirror Book was well received, but it wasn't something MedStar Innovation felt worked with the game plan. So we started talking further and said, "What if we make it an app?" This is where MedStar is going. We want to give patient something that's easy and low cost.

*Was it difficult to convert a physical book into the Face2Face app?*

**Stephen Kinsey:** It was fairly simple, actually. We hired a developer. We vetted probably five different developers to see if they

had the expertise to really work with the iPad camera. Could we have the iPad camera flip itself on the median line? It probably took five or six months of iteration back and forth to get everything we needed.

Essentially, what we've released now, is a beta version. We're trying to get patient feedback so we can go back and release the second version that will be more of a final product.

*How does MedStar commercialize the products its clinicians create?*

**Kinsey:** Our typical model is to find a third-party company that we're going to license our products to. We kind of realized that wasn't going to work in this case. We created our own company, called Adeo, to house the Face2Face app and other apps. That company is going to be responsible for the app. They put it up on the app store.

*Commercializing innovative ideas has become a priority for MedStar. What's the overall goal here?*

**Kinsey:** With changes to health care and how health care is delivered and monetized, hospitals are looking for other sources of revenue. This is another area where hospitals can see non-health-care revenue come in.

The innovation culture at MedStar really is brand new. We are starting a new initiative to get people to think about innovation and get them to know that their ideas could have commercial value

We want to make MedStar one of the most innovative health-care companies on the East Coast. We want people to come here and work here because we're known for innovation. They can actually become inventors.

*What about making money?*

The amount of revenue that would come back to MedStar really depends on the quality of inventions that come from its associates. Right now, we do have a number of inventions that are licensed, so we will see revenue come in.

It is very, very difficult to take these ideas at their early stage and

know what their market share is going to be. If the path to market is quicker, like with Face2Face, maybe it's not a \$10 million product, but it takes relatively small resources to get it to the app store and get it out there.

**Barth:** Even though I know it comes down to dollars, they realize it was also important just for how much [Face2Face] was going to help so many people. So that part of the innovation we applaud, and we loved working with them because it did allow us to touch so many more patients than us just being here in the D.C. area.

## THE BIG IDEA

A physical therapist wants to help patients with facial paralysis. A hospital system wants to turn fresh ideas into moneymakers. They team on an app that may represent the future of medicine.

*Steven Overly covers the business of technology, biotechnology and venture capital in the Washington region for The Washington Post and its weekly Capital Business publication. In that capacity, he has written about start-up struggles, investment trends and major drug discoveries.*