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Former Wagga resident Tess van der Rijt aims to change specialist medical treatment with Private Patient Connect website



Rex Martinich



STARTUP: Former Wagga resident Tess van der Rijt, who has founded Private Patient Connect to offer an online patient system for choosing doctors and surgeons.

Picture: Nick Moir

If former Wagga resident Tess van der Rijt has her way, families will soon be spared some of the difficulties in seeking specialist medical treatment.

A personal experience prompted Ms van der Rijt to quit working for other companies and from her own startup company in the 'health-tech' sector.

"The idea came around over Christmas and my uncle was quite unwell and it became clear that he needed to see a specialist doctor and have surgery," she said.

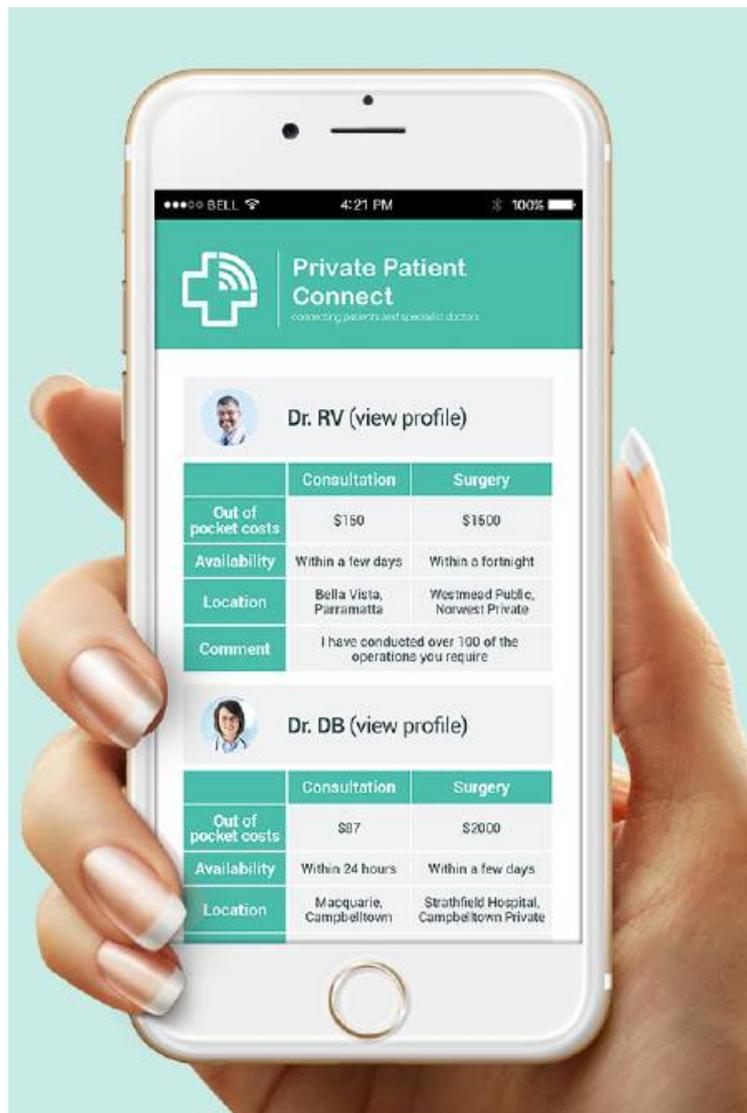
"I am lucky enough to come from a family of with a lot of specialist doctors and we used our networks to try and find a specialist but due to the Christmas holidays, nobody was available.

“As a result, the surgery was prolonged and his recovery was prolonged, so it was a very obvious problem that needed to be solved.”

Struck by how much more difficult the situation would be for families without a medical background, Ms van der Rijt started looking for a way to improve the process.

She ended up quitting her job becoming the founder and chief executive of Private Patient Connect, which aims to release a smartphone app to match patients with specialists.

The aim is for patients to post online ‘jobs’ and then specialists will provide a quote for the procedure.



A mock-up of Private Patient Connect smartphone app that is designed to match patients with medical specialists.

The app is currently being trialled in Sydney's western suburbs with more than 300 specialists based at 13 private and public hospitals.

Ms van der Rijt left Wagga in 2006 to study at Australian National University.

“I’m back in Wagga every few months; my whole family is still there,” she said.

Private Patient Connect received a \$25,000 state grant earlier this year and it plans to make money by charging specialists a referral fee.

“There might be a patient in West Wyalong who is referred to a specialist doctor in Wagga and then they find out the wait list for a procedure is five months,” Ms van der Rijt said.

“What they don’t realise that there might be a specialist doctor in Albury with a waiting list of two months.

“It’s very hard to contact specialists and find out what their availability and surgery fees are.”

Specialists involved in the app could also find it easier to sustain a private practice in regional areas.

<http://online.isentialink.com/dailyadvertiser.com.au/2018/08/15/92e484fb-3388-471a-991f-e6d74c969c16.html>