

DOUBLE CANCER SURVIVOR AND ENTREPRENEUR, ANI HAYKUNI, LAUNCHES VANN – AN INNOVATIVE PLATFORM THAT COMBINES THE EXPERIENCES AND NEEDS OF CANCER PATIENTS, CLINICIANS AND RESEARCHERS.

Vann is a digital platform designed for people living with cancer to help them monitor their health and share their experiences with cancer. Anonymised Real World Evidence reported by their users will aid drug discovery and cancer research.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Vann's story begins back in 2015 when Ani, from Armenia, was accepted into Oxford to study an MBA. Ani explains "It was a very important phase in my life, Oxford was one of the milestones I wanted to reach. But then everything changed. In July 2015 I was diagnosed with stage three breast cancer. I was forced to postpone my studies in Oxford to start my treatment. I was of course devastated, but I remained optimistic. The whole journey has been a very interesting journey for me. Many people say for them it is a dark period, but for me it was productive. It was a time when I learnt so much, about myself, the disease and also the problems other cancer patients face. I didn't give up."

Ani continues, "I suffered terrible side effects from my treatment. I struggled to communicate all these problems with my doctors. People also didn't know how to act around me. So, I realised I was one of the people who needed to break the stereotypes and misconceptions around cancer in society and help others who are going through the same thing.

I wanted to share my story so we did a photoshoot and posted pictures of me on social media, some having treatment and looking ill, but also when I was feeling well. I gained recognition from social media channels and organisations in Armenia.

People around the world would get in touch with me, share their stories, support me and even dedicate fundraising events to me. Due to this campaign patients would tell me how they were now able to go out and talk about the challenges and difficulties they face."

Following Ani's first year of treatment, the doctors told her she could now travel to the UK to study as long as she continued her treatment. She moved to the UK where she successfully complete her MBA at Oxford in 2017. It was during this time she also received the all clear from Cancer. Ani tells us "It was great to be able to complete my MBA and start a new life in the UK. But unfortunately things changed once again when I was diagnosed with reoccurring Cancer in 2019 and had to start treatment. I'm still receiving treatment today. But I continued to remain positive. I kept thinking 'How can I turn this into a positive? How can I help people better understand this disease and what patients go through?'

So, I began developing Vann – a company, a digital product to help the patients overcome those difficulties. This product will help them better understand their disease and share experiences. It will also be a platform to collect and analyse information which will be fed back to researchers and hospitals."



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ENGAGING WITH OXLEP BUSINESS FOR SUPPORT

“I knew of OxLEP Business due to my connections through the University and as an Oxfordshire based, innovative business, I was eligible for support through the ISfB programme. I applied in 2020 to join their business support programme.

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A big area of support offered, which has been a huge help in the development of the business, was the innovation grant funding. My advisor at OxLEP informed when the grant funding round opened and encouraged me to apply. They supported me during the application process and helped guide me through the paperwork, which was excellent. I was delighted to receive a grant award!”

Ani tells us how OxLEP’s support and funding has helped them reach this point. “Vann is in such an exciting phase, we’re growing really fast, we’ve received investment and now working on final development of the digital platform. Even though running a company is not easy and comes with lots of responsibilities, I’m so excited to be developing Vann. OxLEP’s continued support has given us confidence and helped us connect with other organisations. And, their grant funding is supporting the final stages of our platform development following beta testing. Having an organisation like OxLEP on your side is so valuable and I’m grateful for everything they’ve done for me.”

Ani also took part in an event run by OxLEP in partnership with TheHill. “I took part in TheHill workshop which really helped me understand the opportunities and benefits of collaborations in business around Oxfordshire. I met lots of like-minded organisations and thoroughly enjoyed this event. They were also excellent at signposting me to other local support organisations in Oxfordshire which was a great help.”

OXLEP HELP VANN BUILD A POSITIVE FUTURE

Vann will officially be launching in the summer this year. Ani sums up “For someone who was at risk of dying in 2015, to be here now in this position, it feels really amazing. I see a bright future for Vann and can’t wait for it to be available to everyone and see how they feel about it and how it impacts their lives. I want it to be a friend for every cancer patient, to save lives, and create a better future for people living with cancer. OxLEP have been such a great support to me and I highly recommend their support to other innovative businesses in Oxfordshire.”

vann

FOR MORE ABOUT VANN VISIT:
thevann.com



Find out more about OxLEP’s Innovation Support for Business (ISfB) programme:

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