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Exclusive: Babylon has partnership with Ascension

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After months of rumours around how Babylon would enter the US market, HBI can exclusively reveal a jointly-run app between the UK-based telehealth player and not-for-profit US-based hospital group Ascension has been quietly launched.

The app, called SymplCheck, is described on the Google Play and iOS stores as an “Ascension & Babylon collaboration” and appears to only be available in the US. Ascension is one of the largest not-for-profit groups in the States with \$25bn revenues in 2019, 150 hospitals and 15m outpatient visits a year.

The description further says it will contain both an AI-powered symptom checker and a ‘healthcheck’ tool described as an education tool that helps people understand their health risk factors, build a health profile, and understand lifestyle changes that might help them to achieve a healthy lifestyle.

Asked about the partnership and app, Babylon said that it has “nothing more to add at this stage”. It is the highest valued telehealth company in Europe at \$2bn [following a \\$550m fundraising round in August last year](#). Centene, the US-based administrator invested \$50m in the Series C leading to speculation that the pair would embark on a chronic disease management programme together. A source working in the insurance market says the fact that the US has multiple payors, often with very high costs, creates multiple opportunities for Babylon to leverage its AI-assisted technology.

Another source working in telehealth said a US-move was a no brainer: “of course they’ve got to think about the US it’s a key market to hit”. Much of the money raised in the latest fundraising round was likely done so on the US expansion plans.

The company’s strategy manager, Kurt Blasena, told an audience at Boston’s recent Digital Health Innovation Summit that it already had two partners in the States and one of its first implementations would be focused on Medicaid. Centene is the largest Medicaid administrator in the US. He added that it wouldn’t be targeting the B2C market at first roll-out but would be leaning on strategic partners.

Ascension made headlines in November last year following revelations that it transferred the patient records of 50m patients to tech giant Google. A source working in the insurance market says the fact that

the US has multiple payors, often with very high costs, creates multiple opportunities for Babylon to leverage its AI-assisted technology.

Babylon already operates in the UK, Canada, China, Rwanda and South-East Asia.

HBI has contacted Ascension for a response.

We would welcome your thoughts on this story. Email your views to [Rachel Lewis](#) or call 0207 183 3779.



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