

Meet robotic nurse Abby

 By Jessica Tennant

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The Embassy of Israel in South Africa recently announced Johannesburg-based entrepreneur Josh Lasker, founding partner of robotic nurse 'Abby' (formerly known as [Healthinator](#)) as the winner of the local Start Jerusalem Competition 2018.



Josh Lasker

His prize is an intense, all-expense-paid, five-day experience in the 'startup nation' of Israel, during the annual Start Jerusalem conference taking place 11-17 November 2018.

Winning founders from across the globe will be joined by local Israeli entrepreneurs to participate in lectures, workshops and meetings with Israeli investors and professionals, and will have the opportunity to meet the coolest and smartest companies, techies, investors, designers, artists, scientists, and cultural drivers from Israel and abroad.

Abby is an automated health-screening kiosk that can do 12 health checks in less than two minutes, printing a ticket with your results in comparison to normal values and/or sending these to a secure web portal on your phone. She can be used to monitor wellness, track improvements or setbacks and provide personalised feedback on your health-related queries, and can measure the following:

- Height
- Weight
- Blood pressure
- Body fat percentage
- Body mass index (BMI)
- Metabolic age
- Total body water
- Daily caloric intake (DCI)
- Basal metabolic rate (BMR)
- Pulse
- Standard body weight

- Fat-free mass

I asked Lasker more about the thinking behind this innovative medical technology and what this opportunity means to him... and Abby.

▣ ***How did you come up with the idea to create a self-service health kiosk or robotic nurse; and its name 'Abby'?***

Abby has been developed over the last couple of years to get to where it is now as an FDA and CE approved health device. The idea stemmed from realising the need to educate the public about their health on a regular basis, and in an easy-to-understand manner. The name represents going from A to B, *BY* taking the next small step in wellness.

▣ ***When and why did you get started?***

We got started with Abby in 2018, which is a combination of previous models and prototypes that we toyed with over the last few years.

Why we are on this journey is to combat the rising obesity epidemic and create value and economic opportunities for all our stakeholders.

▣ ***Describe the model; how the product/service works.***

Abby is a free-to-use health station that requires no human intervention in the measurement process.

▣ ***Next steps; plans to scale?***

The next step is to make Abby available and accessible to all South Africans as a start, following a roll out into suitable African countries.

■ **When and where it's being rolled out?**

It is being rolled out in government and private organisations, as well as major retail locations that will be announced in 2019.

■ **How do you define your social impact and how do you measure it?**

Obesity and non-communicable diseases are rising at uncontrollable rates. The costs of these lifestyle diseases are threatening to tear down global healthcare systems. Our mission is to prevent these lifestyle diseases and the associated costs that go with them.

We are able to measure the impact with data we collect and analyse. By allowing people to monitor and track multiple health measurements in a simple two-minute process, we are providing the knowledge and data needed in order to change unhealthy behaviours.

■ **Being Entrepreneurship Month, comment on the current state of entrepreneurship in South Africa, and your experience of starting up in the local context (opportunities / barriers).**

Entrepreneurship in South Africa is tough at the moment. There are macroeconomic forces that are not in our favour. That being said, hardship always breeds the best entrepreneurs because people are in an environment where they are forced to think about viable solutions to real problems.

■ **What does this recognition mean to you and for the business?**

Winning the competition has been great publicity for Abby. It also gives us reassurance that we are on the right track as a health tech startup. The amount of positive feedback has been overwhelming and the future looks bright for Abby.

■ **Other proudest achievements to date?**

We were selected to go and showcase Abby and pitch to an international jury of investors at ITU Telecom World 2018 in Durban, in September this year. I was invited to talk about the internet of medical things (IoMT) at the recent Health Innovation Summit Africa hosted at Gallagher Convention Centre. We were also represented at the Fourth Industrial Revolution Summit last month as a guest speaker.

■ **What are you most looking forward to with regard to your Israel trip to Start Jerusalem 2018?**

Falafel.

So am I! I'm attending the Ministry of Foreign Affairs press delegation and Start Jerusalem 2018 conference in Israel next week, where I'll get a glimpse into the Israeli startup culture and medtech ecosystem, so watch this space...

In the meantime, follow Lasker on [LinkedIn](#), Abby on [Facebook](#), and the Embassy of Israel in South Africa on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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