



WOMEN'S HEALTH

IT'S TIME TO RE-SET AND REHUMANISE

HEALTH 
BY BBD PERFECT STORM

A FRESH APPROACH

At the back end of last year you'd be forgiven if you missed the government's move to set out a new vision for women's health here in the UK. Following research with women across the British Isles what was clear was that, just as in so many other aspects of life, when it comes to healthcare women are not getting the service they deserve or indeed need.

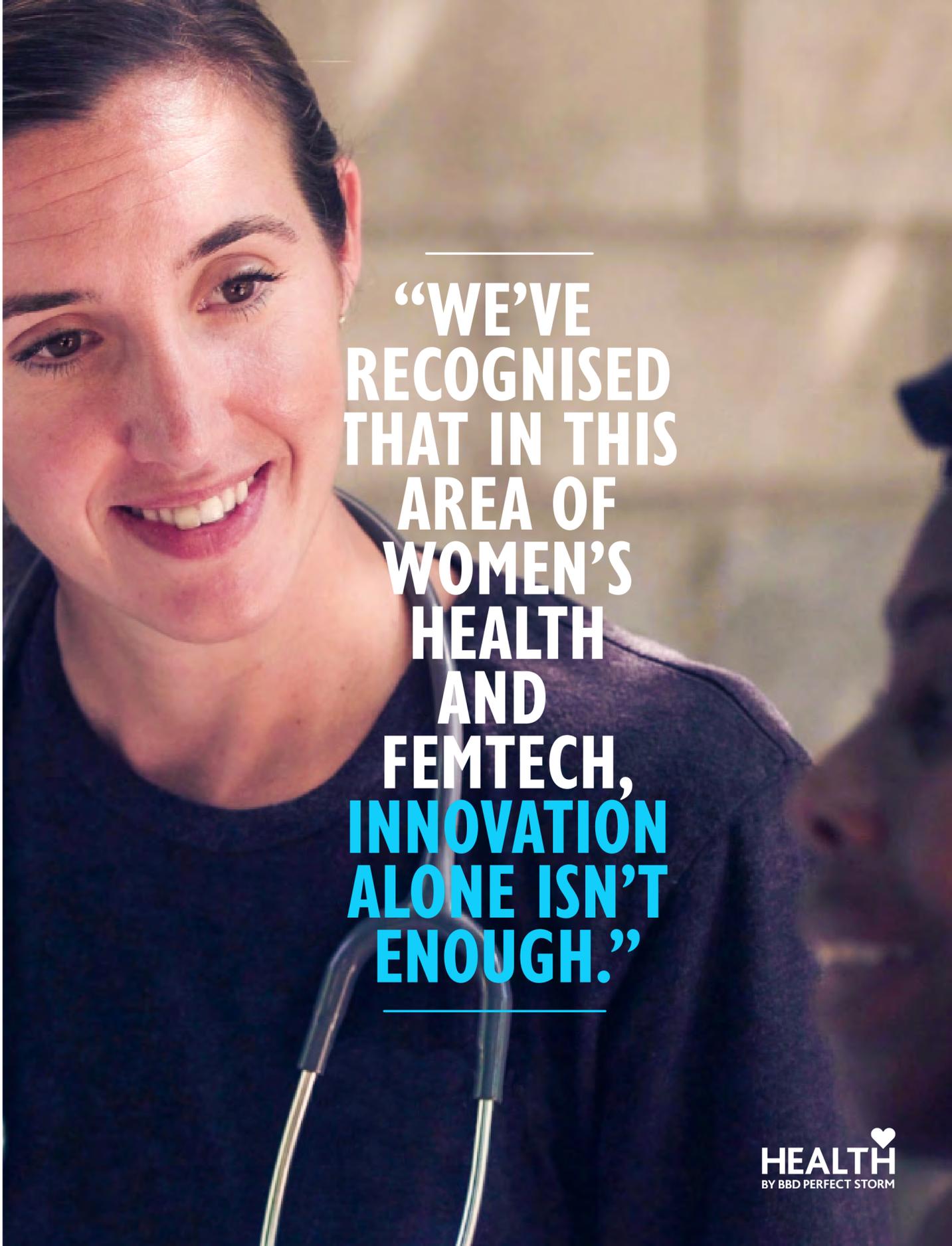
This simply isn't good enough and at BBD Perfect Storm Health we're committed to help bring about change. This report is for those communicating with women about their health and offers insight as to how to do it more effectively.

As many as 8 out of 10 women felt that they weren't listened to when it comes to matters concerning their health. Many elements to do with health issues affecting only women aren't prioritised and in some instances are even seen as taboo. If you look deeper you begin to realise that so much of our healthcare is male centric. Historically, medical research has focused more on the male body than that of females, meaning we know more about the effects of certain conditions and drugs on men than their female counterparts. Some procedures that are just for women, typically gynaecological examinations or those carried out before, during and after childbirth haven't seen innovation in over a hundred years.

The government's new women's health strategy will be launched in the spring of this year to, for want of a better expression, 'level up' health care, but we don't have to wait until then to see some 2 glimmers of hope for the female kind. Here we have selected some FemTech and MedTech innovations or 'Femininnovations' which are focusing specifically on the needs of women and are already having a huge impact on the lives of ladies across the UK and beyond. As experts in brand and cultural transformation we've recognised, especially in this area of women's health and FemTech, innovation alone isn't enough. It's not just about focusing on what we do, we need to look closely at how we're doing it too. It's not just about having the technology available for women, what's needed is an entirely fresh approach to women's health. Resetting this unhealthy imbalance through innovation is great, but women's health also needs greater compassion, emotion and understanding... what we call re-humanised. What follows are examples where progress is being made. Where tech and innovation meet with empathy and human understanding: Where women's health is being rehumanised through innovation.



Nick Dutnall
Managing Partner, Perfect Storm Health



**“WE’VE
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HUMAN SHAPED INNOVATION



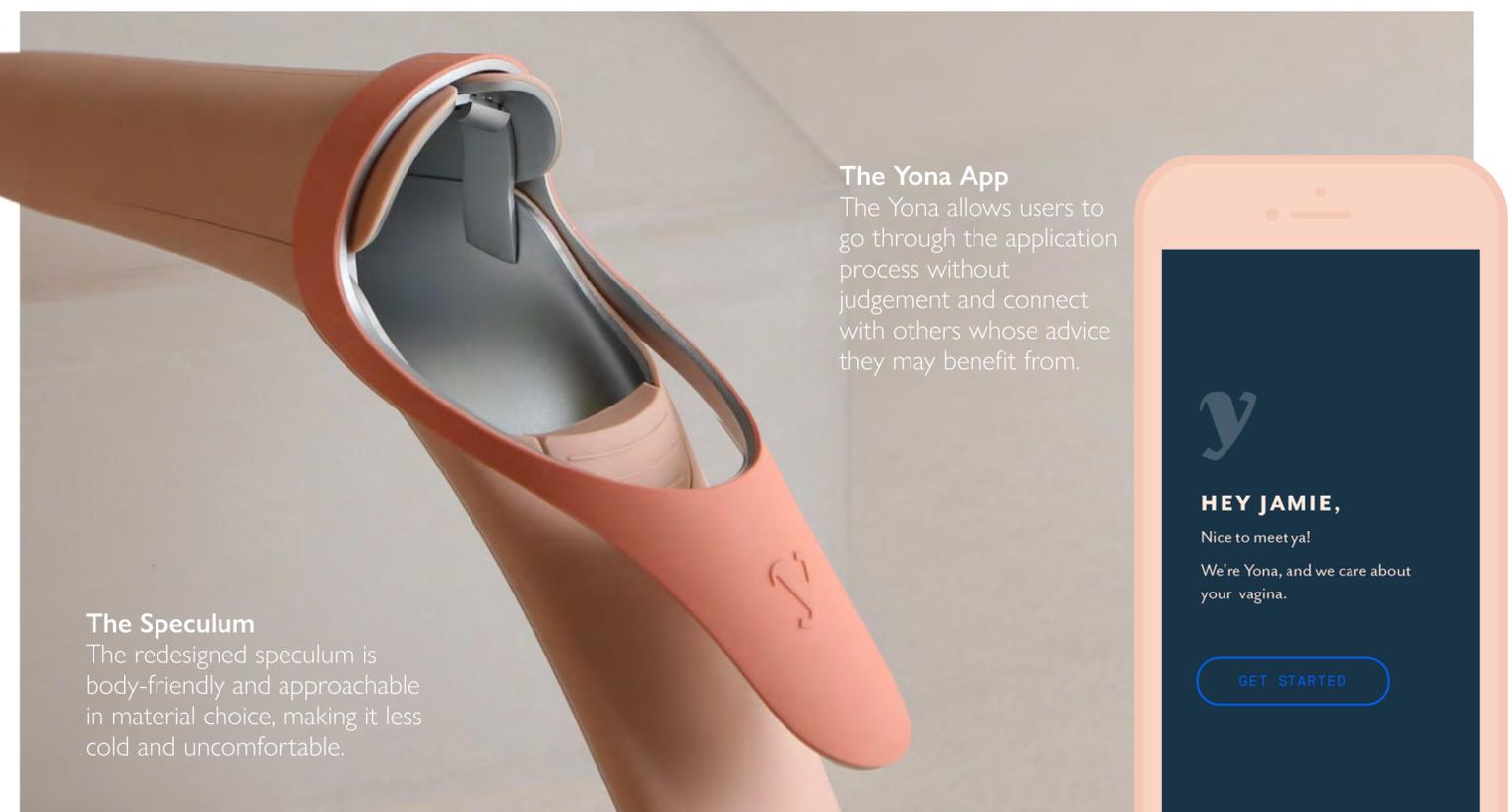
By **Anna Butterworth**

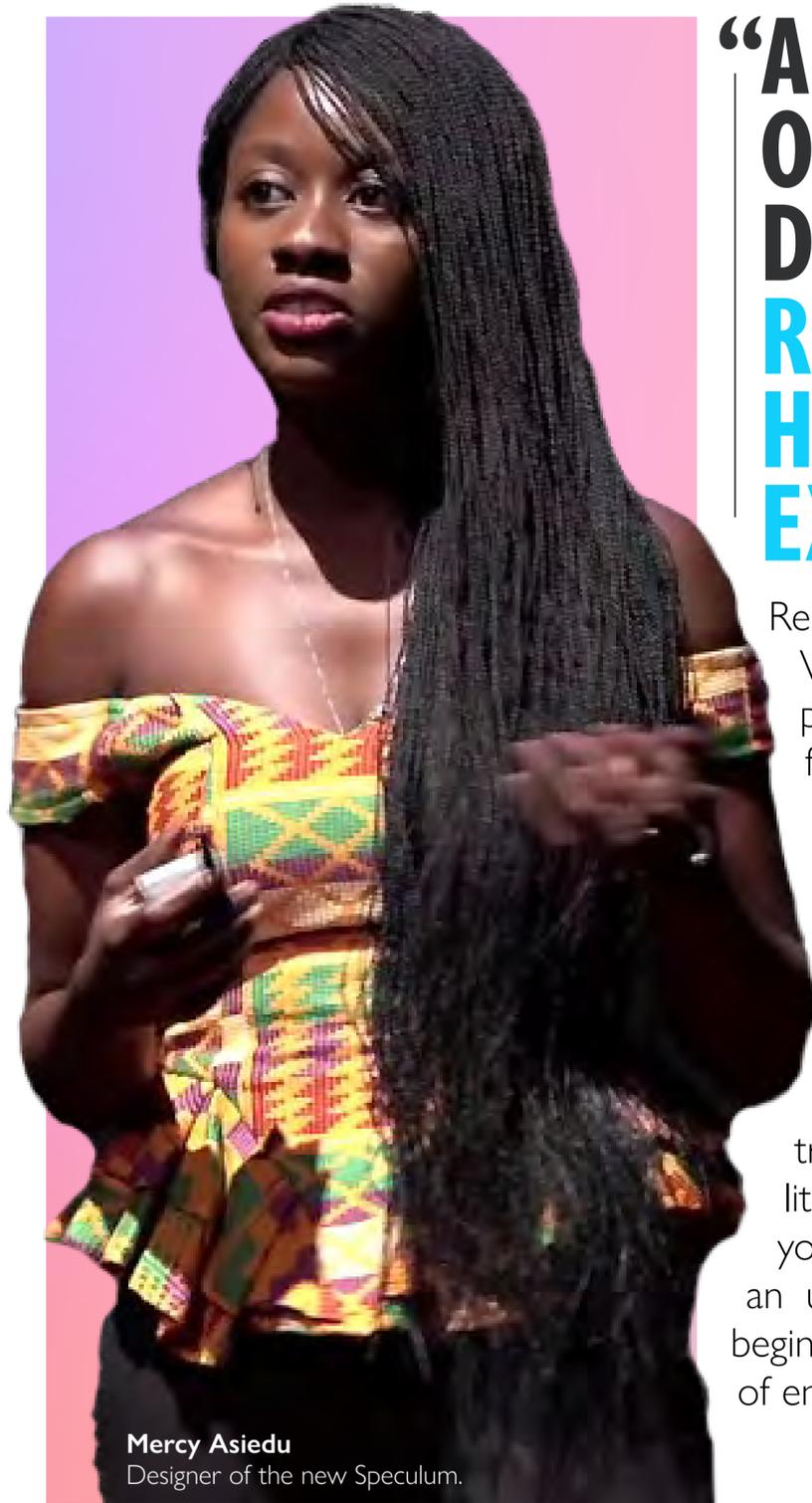
Ultra Violet Futures

The future is FemTech. Yes, I'm a bit biased as I run the first trend forecasting agency focused on FemTech; [Ultra Violet Futures](#), but when you look at the innovation from that sector, it is undeniable. FemTech is both the disruptive younger sister and the wise aunt of the healthcare world,

combining an innate understanding of empathetic, user centric design with the latest technology from the gaming and entertainment industries.

What excites me most about the space is the innate understanding of the human impact of innovation, and how to maximise the real world benefits to end users. The issues FemTech seeks to resolve are far more entrenched in emotional complexity; abortion, menopause and mortality in childbirth to name a few and therefore **empathetic technology is at the heart of development.** Products are designed for the person, not for the market.





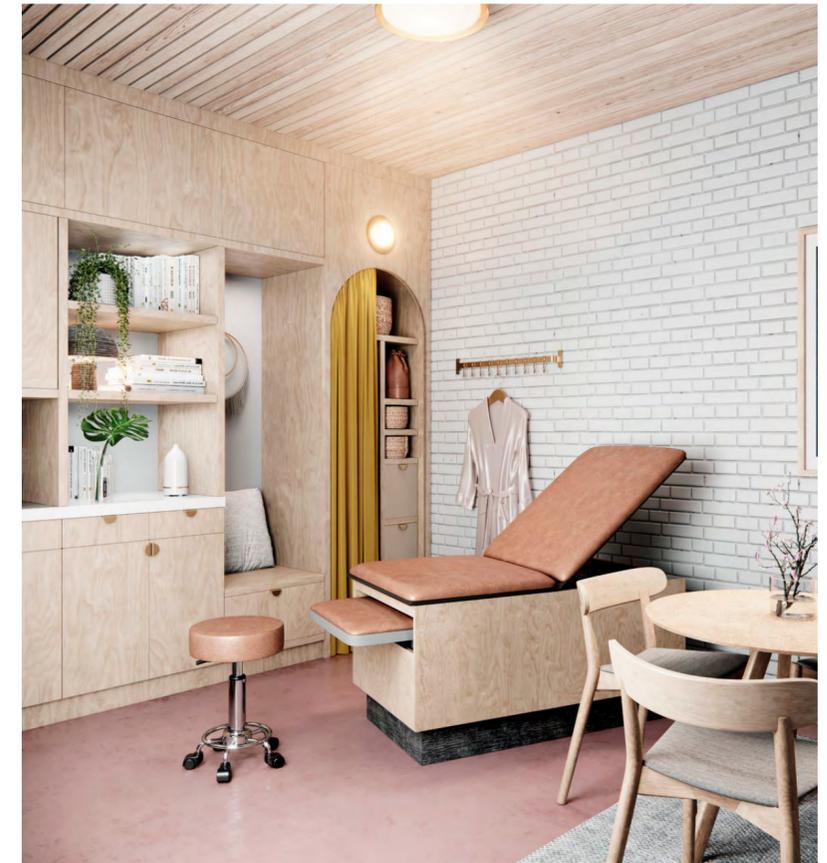
Mercy Asiedu
Designer of the new Speculum.

“A NEW WAVE OF DISRUPTIVE DESIGNERS ARE REIMAGINING HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCES”

Recent research conducted by Ultra Violet Futures with healthcare providers, medical professionals, founders and investors, shows how the empathetic approach to many FemTech innovations is being adopted by wider health and wellness industry players. It's not until you consider the impact of an ill-timed push notification which, when tracking steps, could just be a little annoying; but when tracking your menstrual cycle, could mean an unwanted pregnancy; that you begin to understand the importance of empathy in the design process.

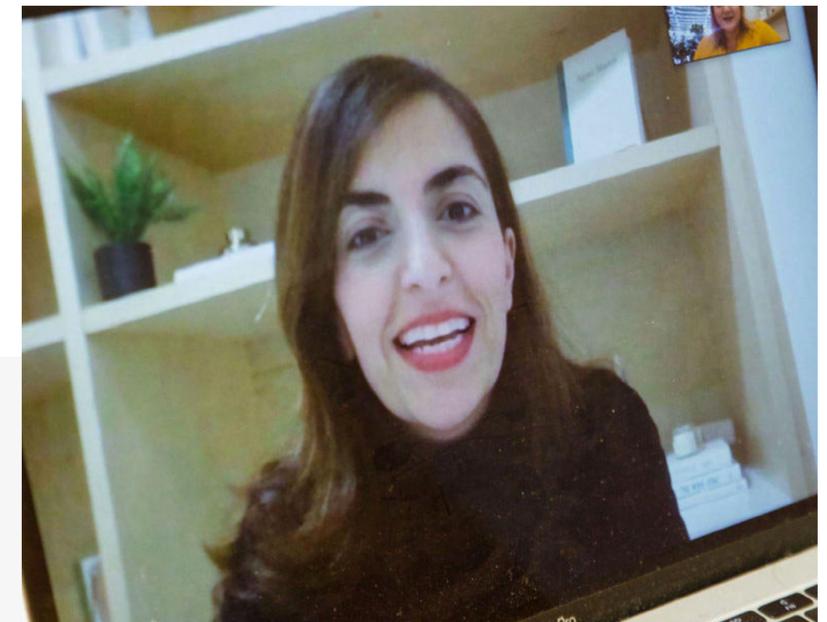
Evidenced in our two reports [FemTech Futures 2023](#), and [The Future of Cycle Care 2022](#), the design of care pathways is being overhauled across sectors to deliver a more holistic approach to the delivery of support.

For years women, and those with vulvas, have been sold the idea that certain routine examinations and procedures include unavoidable levels of discomfort, but a new wave of disruptive designers are tackling this fallacy head on, reimagining healthcare experiences from a patient-centred perspective. [Yona](#), an early-stage experience design concept, has set about humanising the pelvic exam, taking into consideration patient comfort at every touchpoint. From pre-exam information shared through an app, to a total redesign of the speculum and the option to purchase a reusable 'comfort kit', Yona worked to eliminate both physical and mental discomfort from the whole experience.



Kindbody Clinic (top right)

A Kindbody Clinic in the Flatiron District of New York. Kindbody have created spaces that fostered conversation and socializing, so women don't ever have to feel alone.



Virtual Courses (bottom right)

A Kindbody virtual course in session.

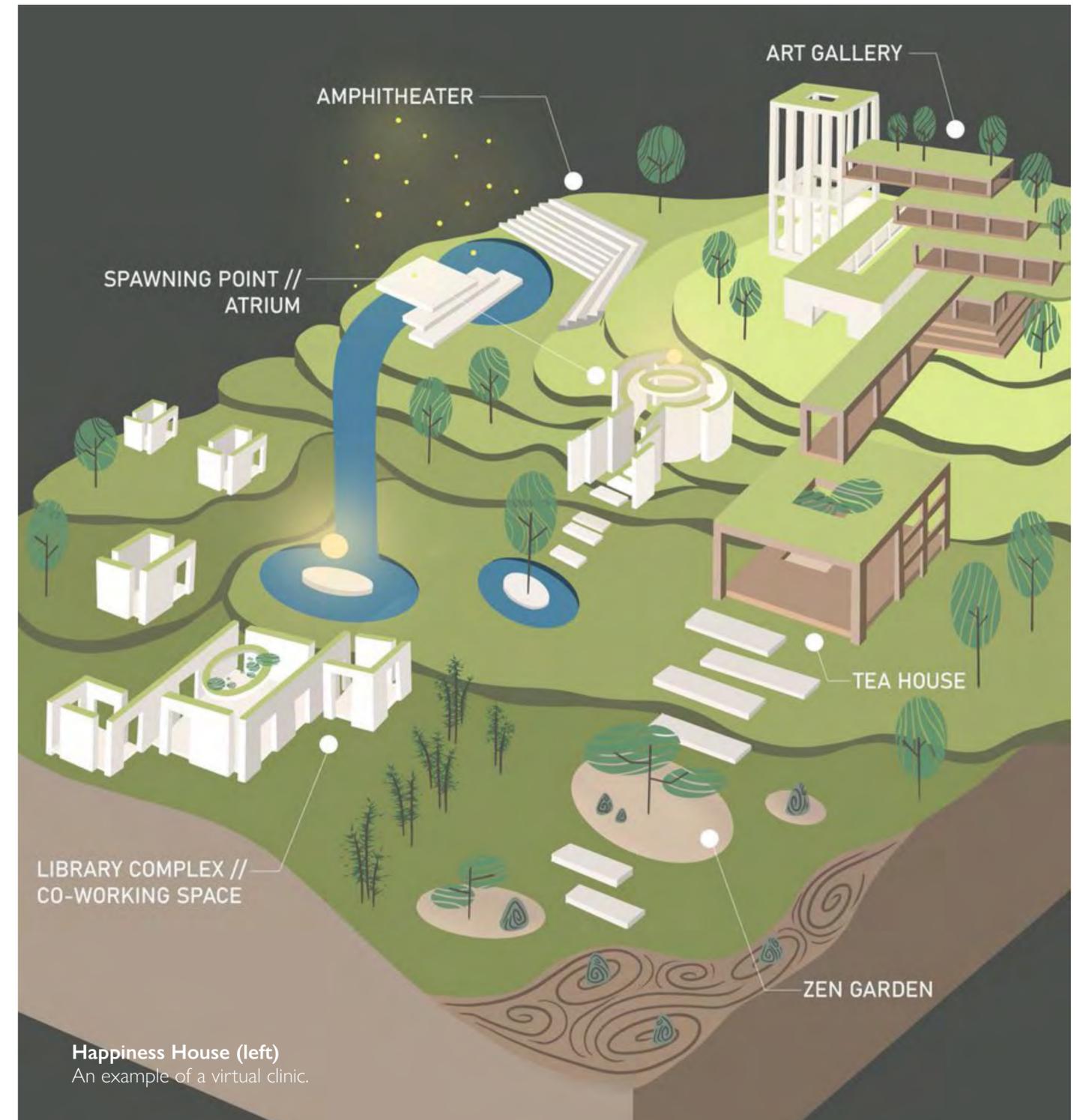
“VIRTUAL WORLDS WILL ALLOW HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS TO HUMANISE AND PERSONALISE EXPERIENCES”

Beyond the tools and tech, clinics are also taking note of how people are particularly reactive to the spaces they are in. As such a dialogue has been created between health and architecture that is working to improve the psychological wellbeing of people in real world spaces to make them more at ease during invasive procedures and emotionally challenging consultations.

[Kindbody](#) is a great example of how this trend has taken flight. They have taken a traditionally challenging journey, that of fertility, and are offering a more holistic approach for patients. Their latest treatment centre is designed with the aesthetic of a spa but with the services of a medical centre. We expect to see more examples of traditionally cold and impersonal clinics and experiences given a holistic makeover.

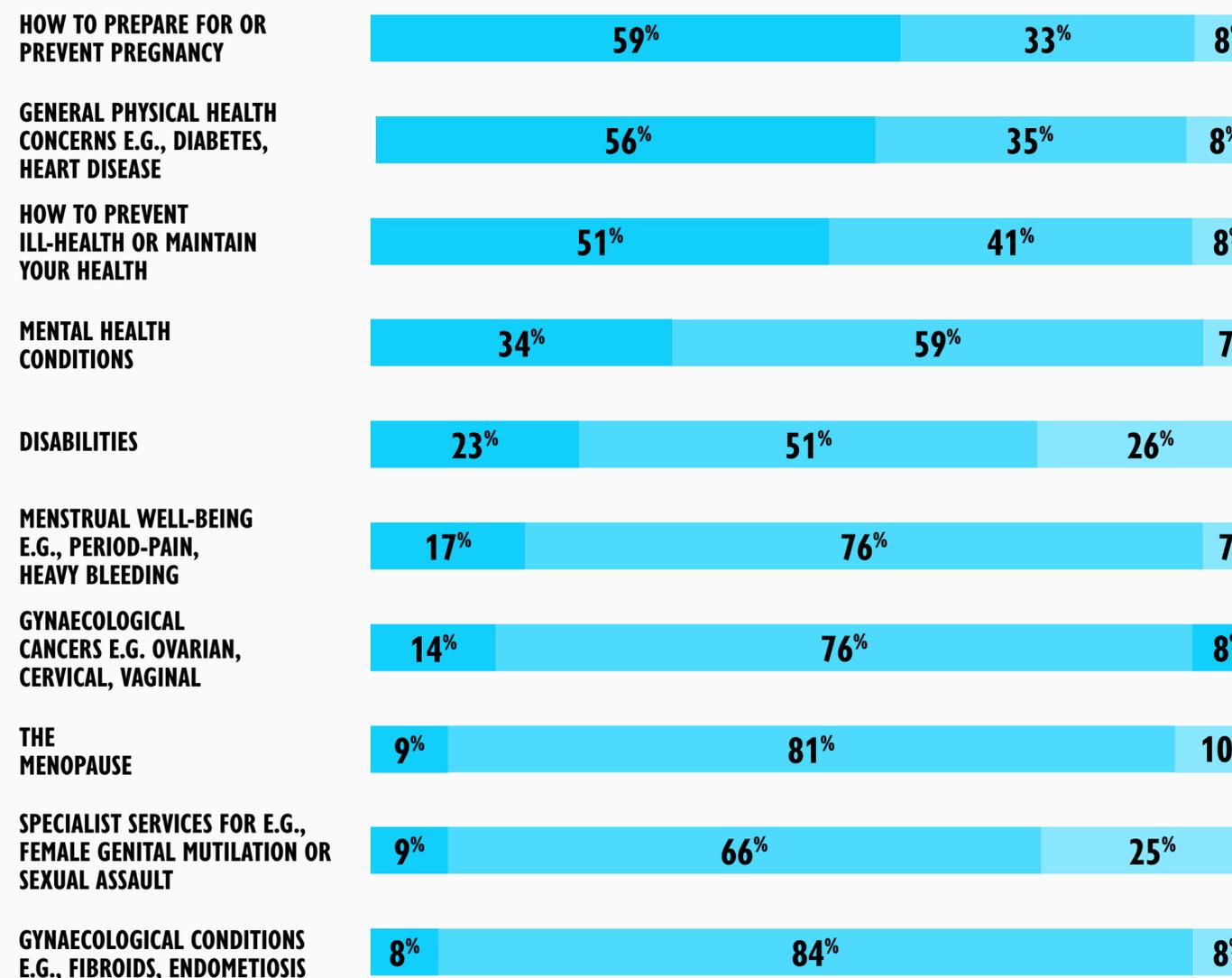
However, the future of FemTech is not restricted to the physical realm. With the vast adoption of tele-health during lockdown, consumers acquired an enduring expectation around accessibility and personalisation. As we move towards 2023 we anticipate a thoughtfully constructed hybrid of virtual clinics, at home testing and sensory experiences. Evidenced in our [FemTech Futures 2023](#) macro trend, Hybrid Health, virtual worlds will allow healthcare providers to humanise and personalise experiences in ways that in person clinics or tele-health cannot do in silos.

For example; [Happiness House](#) is the world's first completely free and non-gated mental health resource in the Metaverse. Equipped with several professional and peer run tools and built in partnership with The Sandbox (a virtual gaming world where players can build, own, and monetise their gaming experiences), Happiness House has the ability to reach those otherwise reluctant to seek help. Creating a space that can be accessed anonymously but can simultaneously provide personalised and professional care, is a completely unique offering only deliverable in the Metaverse.



In short, healthcare has spent decades being built around those delivering care rather than those receiving it, but we are finally starting to see this change. The pandemic has helped the industry to race ahead to new technologies and remote service delivery but it's thanks to the new wave of FemTech focused start-ups that have chosen to put the person at the centre of the service and truly realise the possibility of empathetic technological innovation. Brands and businesses across industries should take note of these developments and look at how they can include more empathetic design. ❤️

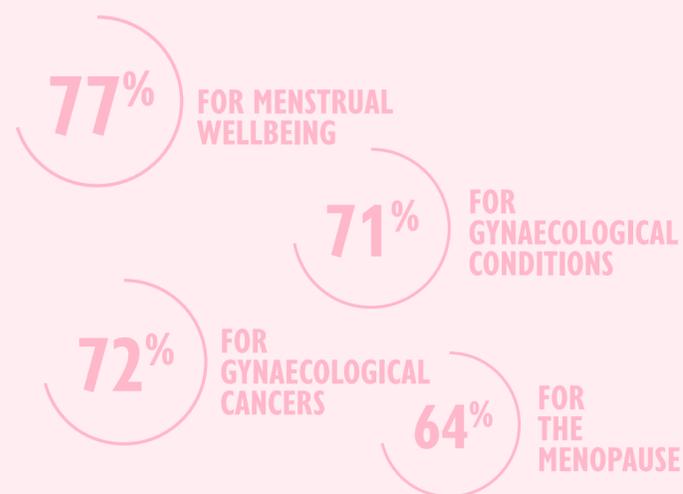
(RIGHT) DO YOU THINK YOU, OR THE WOMAN YOU HAVE IN MIND HAVE RECEIVED OR HAVE ACCESS TO ENOUGH INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS



WOMEN'S VOICES

Over 4 in 5 women (85%) feel, or are perceived to feel, comfortable talking to healthcare professionals about general physical health concerns. This falls to less than 3 in 5 women when discussing mental health conditions (59%).

When asked about specific women's health topics, the proportion of women who felt (or were perceived to feel) comfortable talking to professionals was:



**“THE UK HAS THE LARGEST FEMALE
HEALTH GAP IN THE G20”**

Women's health outcomes: Is there a gender gap? - Nicole Winchester

FIGHTING THE TABOOS IN WOMENS HEALTH - THE HEGENBERGER RETRACTOR



By **Marie Louise**
The Modern Midwife

Suturing tools have been long-neglected in maternity and discussions around suturing (stitches in the perineum and vagina after birth) are mostly avoided or seen as not sexy and perhaps even taboo. Very rarely do women feel able to talk freely about their vagina post birth to professionals - let alone anyone else. What most women don't know is that it's very common to get a tear in relation

to birth. 8 out of 10 first-time mums need suturing (5 out of 10 for women who have previously given birth.) **Most women believe it's their fault and think that they did something wrong, which is absolutely not true.**

The last device to aid the suturing process was invented over 150 years ago and is rarely used today, leaving midwives and doctors to use their hands, metal retractors and assistance to hold back the vaginal wall and tissue to visualise and repair trauma after birth.

The lack of attention at a difficult and sadly sometimes traumatic time in a woman's life highlights an all-too-common problem - that **women's healthcare has not been given the attention it deserves.**

Finally, this is changing, thanks to people like Malene Hegenberger, a Danish midwife who was no longer prepared to shy away from the problems faced by many of those who undergo suturing.

It was time to tackle the taboo.

Malene wanted to support her colleagues to maintain gold standard practice in suturing birth related tears, to improve women's repair experiences and to reduce needle stick injuries (being pierced by a needle) to clinicians.

Malene Hegenberger (Above Right)
Certified Nurse Midwife, Founder & CEO.

The Hegenberger Retractor (Right)
The Hegenberger Retractor enables a better overview of tears, better working conditions for clinicians and a better patient experience.



There is often a lot of emphasis on pregnancy, scans, birth itself, pain relief in labour and how to care for newborns. Women and their families are usually fairly well-informed about this time. Women who experience perineal trauma (approx. 70% in the U.K.) are shocked when they learn about the procedure they need to undergo in order to repair their birth trauma. **It is very common for new mothers to focus on their baby and push their needs aside** - ignoring their own health and wellbeing or pain. This can cause problems to go undiagnosed and therefore untreated for many months or even years. For example, pain during sex is not normal, but it's not uncommon for women that have had a baby. Women are often too embarrassed to seek help and resort to 'just putting up with it'. By bringing attention to the topic of perineal trauma

and the suturing process Malene has enabled hundreds of women to feel able to speak up about their experiences and ask questions about their upcoming birth. Malene has also supported thousands of clinicians to enhance their learning and be given the opportunity to adapt their practice according to modern innovation.

Handling and manually holding back damaged, bleeding tissue is often uncomfortable and can be difficult for both women and clinicians. Can you imagine any other area of medicine or surgery where a person is fully awake, caring for/feeding another person whilst undergoing a surgical procedure in suboptimal conditions? The intimate procedure can leave women feeling vulnerable as their legs are held up in place

**“IT IS VERY COMMON FOR
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with the support of stirrups and a lamp shines onto their most private bodily part whilst a clinician puts their fingers in and out of their vagina and pushes back tissue to visualise and repair their wound.

After practicing midwifery internationally for 21 years Malene consistently questioned why the tools required for this procedure hadn't been updated. Why are we still using our hands to do this or requiring the assistance of a second person? Why are we still not talking about how this procedure can be improved? Surely there must be a better way.

Although uncomfortable for some people to talk about, looking for a solution became an obsession of Malene's - she did not let other people's reactions to the topic deter her and kept the needs of the women she cares for at the forefront of her mind.

Like many inventors, she started out with some simple materials and an idea. At her kitchen table back in 2015, the process was difficult and time consuming, but four years later turned into the Hegenberger Retractor. A device that is revolutionising

“WHAT MOST WOMEN DON'T KNOW IS IT'S VERY COMMON TO GET A TEAR IN RELATION TO BIRTH”

suturing after birth. The flexible silicone speculum stays expanded while inserted so you can visualise clearly whilst using both hands to suture, allowing clinicians to perform the procedure without an assistant, improving women's experiences and simplifying the process.

Featured on CNN and winner of Danish Design Awards and finalist of The Index Awards.

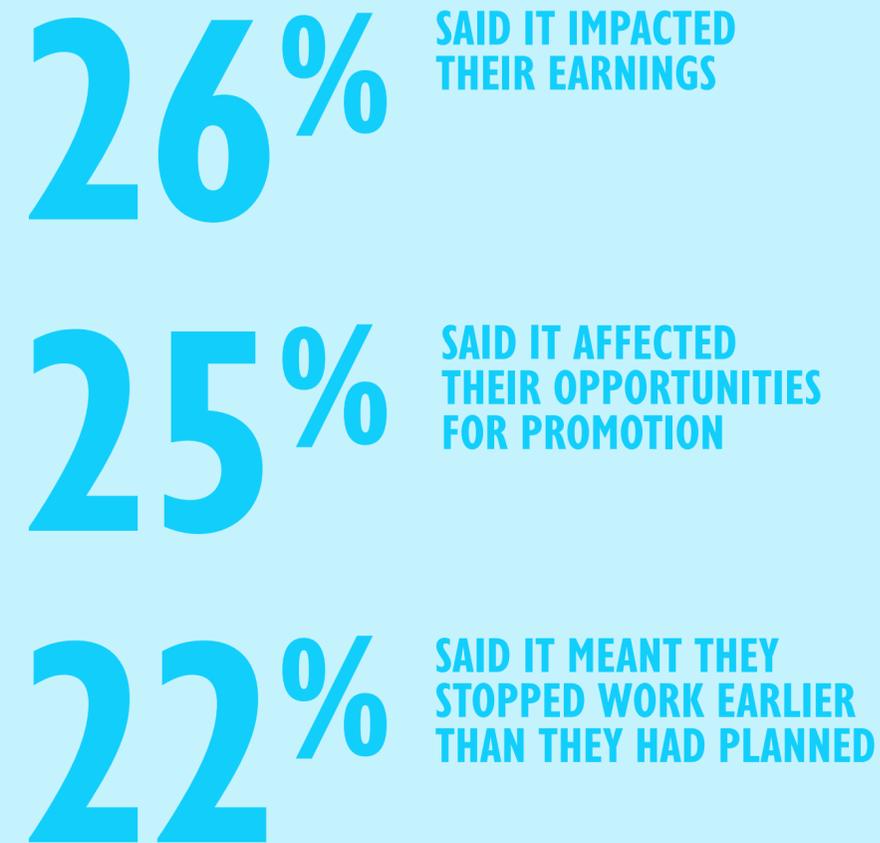
Click the link for more information about [The Hegenberger Retractor](#) and what it can offer you and the ladies you care for. ❤️



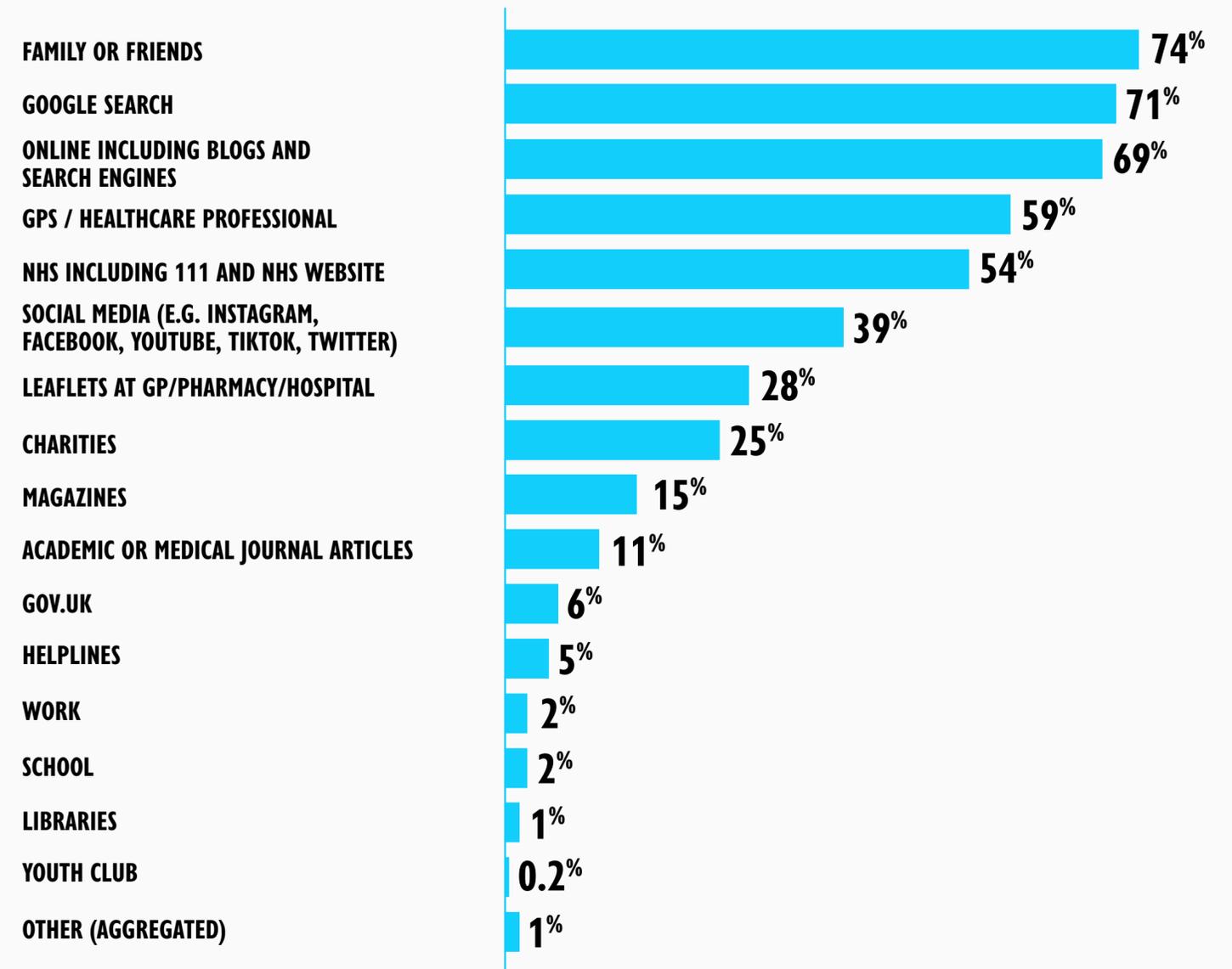
HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

Around 1 in 3 respondents said women feel comfortable talking about health issues in their workplace (35%), and 1 in 2 said their current or previous workplace had been supportive with regards to health issues (53%).

Of those who said a health condition or disability had impacted their experience in the workplace (62%), more than 3 in 4 said it had increased their stress levels (76%) and 2 in 3 said it had impacted their mental health (67%). We also found that:



WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SOURCES DO YOU OR THE WOMEN IN YOUR LIFE GO TO FOR HEALTH INFORMATION? PLEASE PICK UP TO 5.



**“WOMEN ARE 50% MORE LIKELY
TO BE MISDIAGNOSED FOLLOWING
A HEART ATTACK”**

Gender data gap: Caroline Criado Perez on how healthcare is systemically discriminating against women” Evening Standard 26th Sept 2019

PICO IN WOMEN'S HEALTH; INTIMATE INNOVATION



By **Matt Roberts**
Senior Marketing
Director,
Smith + Nephew

As global leaders in wound care, our mission is to help people live a life unlimited by wounds. There's no better example of us fulfilling this mission than in the post-operative treatment and care of women during some of the most intimate and emotive times of their lives; post caesarean section (c-section) and post mastectomy. **These procedures sit at the heart of womanhood** and have one very clear thing in common;

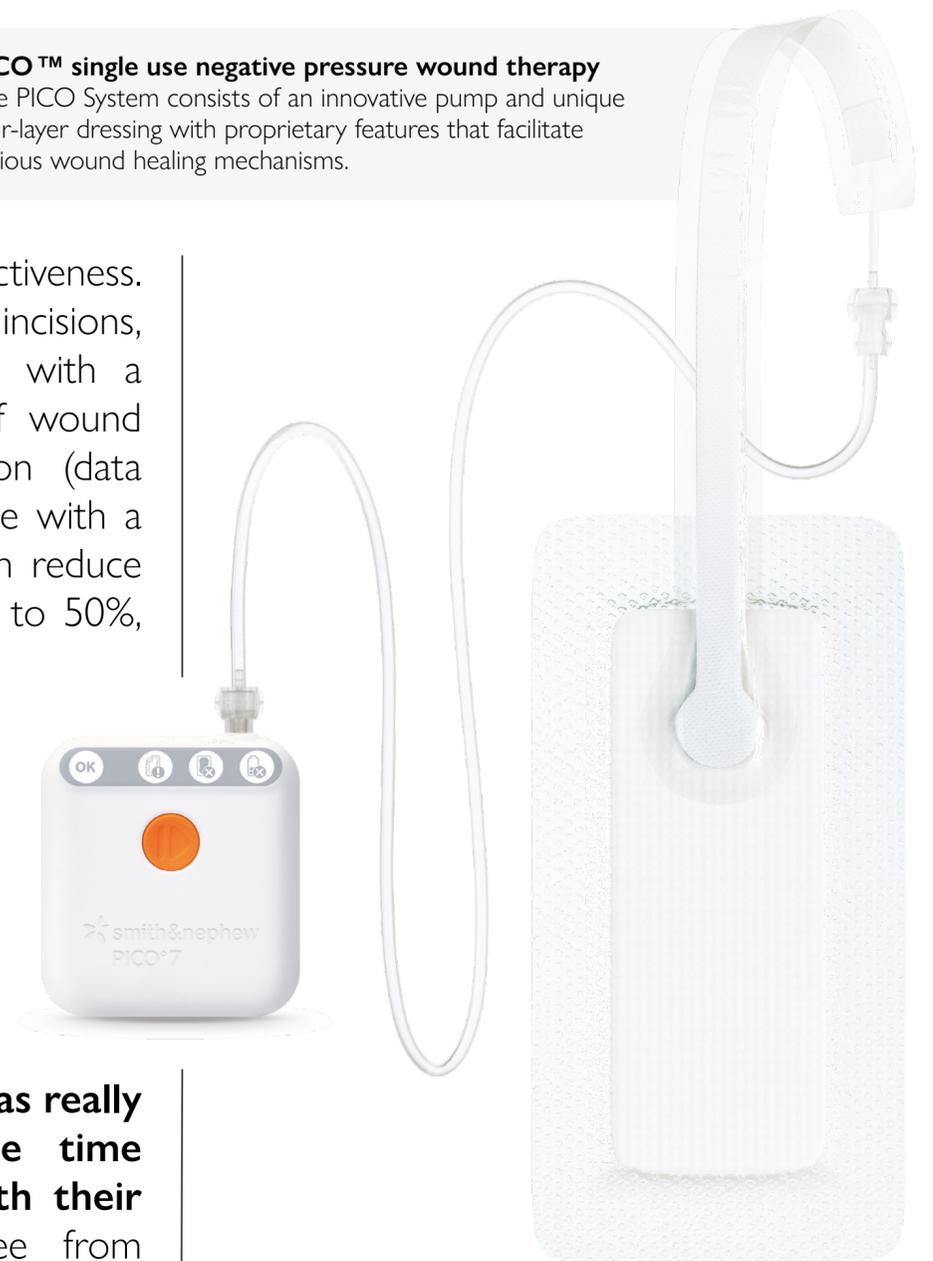
in both cases the woman is left with a wound that they don't want to think about and certainly don't want to have any complications from. **Our aim is that following either procedure the patient's mind is firmly on other things, not on the wound they've been left with as a consequence of their operation.**

PICO™ single use negative pressure wound therapy, is an innovative device which is indicated for use on post-operative incision sites, including those found post C-section or post mastectomy. When educating healthcare professionals about the device we soon learnt that it was essential for us to bring the technology to life by the impact that it had on women's lives, not just by explaining the mode of action of the device or

indeed the evidence of its effectiveness. For example c-section incisions, particularly those of women with a high BMI, are at high risk of wound complication including infection (data suggests around 49% for those with a BMI over 30). Using PICO can reduce the chance of infection by up to 50%, when compared to standard post-op treatment. Impressive stats, but what we worked hard to find was what this meant to a new mum.

Through researching this with both clinicians and mum's who had used the device we discovered that **what PICO was really doing was protecting the time that these women had with their newborn babies.** Time free from unnecessary doctors appointments.

PICO™ single use negative pressure wound therapy
The PICO System consists of an innovative pump and unique four-layer dressing with proprietary features that facilitate various wound healing mechanisms.



Time free from the pain associated with a surgical site complication. Time to bond with their newest arrivals. Once we landed on this insight it became clear to us that the secret to our success in c-section treatment was for us to blend the innovative nature of PICO and its technological capabilities with this heartfelt human benefit that the device was providing new mums. It's so easy sometimes as the manufacturers of technological, medical developments such as PICO to want to focus on the technology inside the device and indeed on the clinical benefits that these provide. We've learnt that taking a step back is essential. **We now always seek to answer the question; And what does this all mean for the patient?** It's vital to not assume. It's even more important to look at these developments as human beings.

A great example of where this was done is for the use of PICO in double mastectomy patients. This approach actually helped with our new product development and meant that we could bring a product to market that we knew would answer an



‘WE’VE LEARNT SO MUCH ABOUT GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT BETWEEN TECHNOLOGY SPEAK AND HUMAN IMPACT.’



“IN ONE STUDY, PICO REDUCED (WOUND SEPARATION) BY AS MUCH AS 75% AND HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE APPEARANCE OF POST-OPERATIVE SCARRING.”

unmet need for our customers and their patients - namely the need for two, not just one, anatomically shaped dressings for treatment delivered with one PICO. In this instance it was a human, patient insight that led to the development of the product itself. What's amazing is the impact that such a simple product development can have. Typically in these types of wounds dehiscence (the incision site breaking down and re-opening) and scarring are major concerns. In one study using PICO reduced dehiscence by as much as 75% and had a significant impact on the appearance of post-operative scarring. I'd like to

think that dealing with the physical effects of a double mastectomy in this way goes some way to enabling the women undergoing this treatment to focus more on the mental and emotional impact of such a procedure. What's also great to know is that in these types of wounds PICO can help reduce the risk of post-operative complications and hopefully help these women leave hospital sooner.

With the emergence of revolutionary technology such as PICO in Women's health, **we've learnt so much about getting the balance right between technology speak and human impact.** When you see the impact that PICO is having on the lives of women undergoing this type of surgery, however, it makes you take a step back and bring the human benefits to life. With such intimate procedures it's impossible not to focus on how this technology affects the lives of those it's used on and we're delighted to see our products used in this way. Truly bringing our purpose to life and helping women undergoing c-section and mastectomy to lead a life unlimited. ❤️

PLAY YOUR PART

It's clear that we have a long way to go until we have closed the gap in women's health, but it's evident to see that progress is being made and with the right focus you too can play your part in helping to change the culture around women's health.

Attention has finally been brought to this overlooked area of healthcare and through innovations made in MedTech, and more specifically in the FemTech world, women are beginning to get the treatment and service that they so clearly deserve. Our desire, however, is that with the launch of the government's new Strategy for Women's health, we don't just see tokenistic, box ticking at play. What's essential for the creation of a new approach to women's health is a complete change in the culture surrounding the care that is provided, across the whole of the healthcare sector. We need a system that is built around the needs of women receiving care. Products and services that are created around the physical, mental and emotional priorities of women. An emotive, cultural revolution supported by empathetic technological innovations. And what can we do to help close this absurd gap as healthcare communications experts?

- Start by acknowledging that a gap exists and talk to experts about how you can help address the imbalance
- Recognise that innovation alone is not enough. It must be coupled with the human impact it makes and brought to life through the right communications
- Always ask 'what does that mean to female patients?' and 'how can I humanise my communications in order to bring this to life?'

We'd like to thank the authors who have shared their stories in this report and given us hope of what is possible as we all look to further transform the world of women's health. Do get in touch to find out how we can help you re-set and rehumanise your women's health communications. ❤️





At BBD Perfect Storm Health, we are on a mission to bring humanity back to healthcare marketing. Now, more than ever, consumers and healthcare systems are demanding more from brands and the businesses behind them. Through our expertise in RX, OTC, MedTech and wellness brands as well as, our brand and cultural transformation process, we are helping health brands rehumanise their communications to ensure they're ready for the next age of healthcare.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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