



**How I got started with Dr. Suzanne Sysko Clough & Ryan Sysko**  
Founders, WellDoc Inc. in Baltimore

By Scott Graham  
September 7, 2011

**What is it?:** WellDoc is a health care company that develops technology to support patients and providers in the management of chronic disease. Our initial focus is on diabetes management where we have a health care system that helps coach patients in real time using everyday technology like the cellphone.

**When was it founded?:** March 2005

**Who helped?:** Our initial angel investor was [Baltimore developer] Stuart Greenebaum. He was Suzanne's patient at the University of Maryland Medical Center. He had struggled for years to control his diabetes. He was one of the first people we put on a beta version of our Patient Coach system, and it was like a light bulb went off. That's when he got out his checkbook and said, "If this thing works for me, it's going to work for anybody."

**How was it financed?:** As of today, no institutional funding, all private individuals, friends and family. We've raised upwards of \$20 million to date.

**Where did the idea come from?:** Suzanne is an endocrinologist by training and was in practice trying to do better for her patients. She realized what she was trying to practice was good chronic care in a health care system that is set up for acute care. It boiled down to the fact that better chronic care is really about better patient self-management that occurs only in the everyday life of the patient, not in a doctor's office.

**What have you learned?:** You can only hope that things trend upwards but there are going to be great days and awful days. The second thing, if you're doing something that is truly disruptive, not everyone is going to think it's a good idea.

**Annual revenue:** Close to \$10 million in 2010.

**Is it profitable?:** We're not profitable. And this year will probably be another investment year for us as we're staffing up and nationwide launch.

**Challenges?:** We work in a really challenging industry in health care, and it's been a good lesson learned for us that it's not a consumer industry. It is an enterprise industry, and there are really some entrenched players and entrenched ways of doing business. We had to go and get [U.S. Food and Drug



Administration] approval. It wasn't like we could just show up and say this is a great idea. That was the challenge for us.

**Growth plans?:** There are probably three big areas for us. One is other disease areas, so leveraging and applying our platform to other disease management. The second big area of growth for us will be international, as we think about taking our diabetes platform first to other countries. And lastly, next year, following our clinical trial data release in September, we'll be doing a nationwide rollout of our diabetes service.

**Next big idea?:** I would say the next big idea for us is to execute. It's truly about blocking and tackling and making sure we're prepared to launch this business to hundreds of thousands, if not millions of patients.