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From the Boston Business Journal:

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Premium Content

Executive Profile: Shai Gozani finds success at the corner of health care and technology

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Feb 9, 2017, 10:00am EST

Shai Gozani

Title: Founder, president and CEO of [NeuroMetrix Inc.](#)

Age: 52

Education: Bachelor’s degree, computer science, University of California, Berkeley, 1986; master’s degree, electrical engineering and computer science, University of California, Berkeley, 1988; Ph.D., neurobiology, University of California, Berkeley, 1993; MD, medicine, [Harvard Medical School](#), 1994

Residence: Brookline



W. MARC BERNSAU

Shai N. Gozani, president and CEO of NeuroMetrix in Waltham.

Professional challenge

‘Drastic changes in the health care environment resulted in declining demand for our diagnostics platform. I had to ask myself: “Where do we go next” The answer was taking our neurostimulation expertise and delivering it in a wearable format, which is now Quell. That challenge led NeuroMetrix to its biggest growth opportunity.’

Growing up in the 1970s in Palo Alto, California, not far from where tech giants like [Apple Inc.](#) got their start, Shai Gozani had dreams of one day becoming an entrepreneur.

After obtaining degrees in computer science, electrical engineering and neurobiology at the University of California, Berkeley, Gozani moved to Massachusetts and earned his MD at Harvard. But he had no desire to become an academic or a practicing physician, he recalls.

“I always had that startup bug,” said Gozani.

So in 1996, not long after finishing his studies, Gozani founded a new company called NeuroMetrix Inc. that was at the intersection of technology and health care. More than 20 years later, the Waltham-based

firm has around 65 employees and makes a wearable pain-relief device that is sold at major retailers including CVS and Walgreens.

NeuroMetrix has evolved over the years. Gozani started the company with the goal of developing a non-invasive method of measuring blood glucose levels in diabetic patients. When that didn't work, he switched gears, launching a diagnostics platform in 1999 that used nerve stimulation to assess carpal tunnel syndrome.

At the time, the internet boom was raising concerns among consumers about a possible connection between computer usage and carpal tunnel, and the platform became a success, Gozani recalls. NeuroMetrix went public in 2004, raising \$24 million.

The company won FDA approval in 2012 for Sensus, a drug-free, wearable device that can be purchased over the counter and uses electrical stimulation to raise levels of a natural painkiller called enkephalins. Its latest product, called Quell, works in the same way, but is designed to be more consumer-friendly. It features a Bluetooth device that allows it to communicate with a smartphone, so patients can track their use of Quell against their sleep patterns and physical activity.

Gozani believes that Quell could play an important role in combating the opioid crisis, which has hit Massachusetts residents particularly hard. Electrical stimulation offers patients a non-pharmacologic, non-addictive alternative to opioids, he said. Other non-drug approaches include acupuncture and mindfulness techniques.

"Digital technology has a role to play here," he said. "It provides one tool in the toolbox that people with chronic pain can use."

Gozani, who has three children and lives in Brookline, said he enjoys playing basketball and watching football — especially his beloved New England Patriots, who just won a fifth Super Bowl title — outside of work hours. But as the CEO of a public company, time off is rare.

"In many ways, I view my work here as my hobby," he said.

Max Stendahl
Biotech Reporter
Boston Business Journal

