Creating powerful connections in the name of women’s health – Femtech Canada’s launch event with Driven by Women

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Women represent 50 per cent of Canada’s population, yet women’s health tech is an under researched, underfunded and underserved industry. On January 17, BLG proudly supported Femtech Canada’s inaugural event, bringing together women’s health start-ups, investors and industry leaders across Canada. Over 100 attendees, including over 30 innovative companies and key investors, came together to shape the future of women's health tech.

Read on to learn more about Femtech Canada, the event and the exciting pitch competition which provided an opportunity for femtech companies to showcase their business and goals to a panel of judges and pitch the investors in the room for their support.

Femtech Canada

Femtech — includes products, services, diagnostics and software addressing health and wellness concerns that disproportionately affect women, girls, non-binary folks, trans people, and those assigned female at birth.

Femtech Canada is spearheading the Femtech movement in Canada with its mission to inspire entrepreneurs to lead in women’s health innovation. Femtech connects Canadian femtech companies with the resources and recognition they need to make a difference and deliver on their vision. Their goal is to support companies and innovators currently working in femtech and inspire individuals to fill the ‘white spaces’ that exist in women’s health. The official launch of Femtech Canada is supported by Innovation Factory, a business accelerator/not-for-profit with a long-standing reputation of working with health, med tech, and digital health communities.

BLG recognizes that in addition to facing challenges in the health care space, women can face unique issues in business and leadership. This is why we developed Driven By Women, a BLG initiative that empowers women in business and law. Driven by Women

has expanded scope from local start-ups to become a national cross-industry platform, making BLG's partnership with Femtech Canada a natural fit.

Femtech Canada's launch event with Driven by Women

The event kicked off with an inspiring introductory presentation by Rachel Bartholomew, founder of Femtech Canada and Hyivy Health.

How did Femtech Canada come to be? After her own battle with cervical cancer and experience in the femtech space, Rachel saw the need for action and resources to help further research and development in the industry. She began fundraising and reaching out to other entrepreneurs to see who wanted to come together and make a difference. Rachel articulated two goals to move Femtech forward.

1. **Inspire individuals to fill the white spaces that exist in women's health.** These are spaces that aren't receiving enough attention and research such as menopause and endometriosis.
2. **Support the companies and innovators currently working in femtech**.

The event continued with a panel on femtech's trends and challenges, moderated by Rachel, featuring: Catherine Bornbaum, Chief Business Officer at Retispec; Ella Seitz, Partner at Esplanade Ventures; Christy Prada, CEO of Future Fertility; Zebrina Kassam, Senior Vice President, Pharmacy Planning & Healthcare Businesses of Shoppers Drug Mart; and Kathryn Wortsman, Founder & Managing Partner of Amplify Capital.



The panel discussed: how do start-ups approach commercialization and success as they grow? As investors, what do they look for and value in company? They also shared advice for entrepreneurs and new businesses.

Some key takeaways for start-ups from the panel discussion:

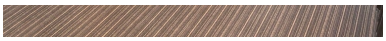
- When fundraising, be prepared; have a clean data cheat and a data room open and ready to go.
- If you were initially unsuccessful with an investor, keep them in mind and updated as your company continues to grow, their interest in investing in your company may change. When approaching investors, build relationships with many contributors in the company (not just the managing partner) and keep the correspondence succinct.
- Investors are interested in seeing that you have the right team, that understands the market and that has the business capability and traction to sell.

After a speed networking session—an opportunity for investors and entrepreneurs to mingle, connect and build partnerships—came the pitch competition. During this time, femtech organizations and startups showcased their business and goals to a panel of judges and pitched investors in the room for their support.

The health tech companies pitching included:

- **Treehouse:** A maternal health and wellness digital hub aimed at healthcare providers, with a mission to streamline operations and improve the overall family care experience by empowering providers and transforming care.
- **Afynia:** The company behind EndomiR, the first non-invasive diagnostic tool for endometriosis, aiming to address gaps in women's health by providing quick diagnoses and peace-of-mind to those suffering from chronic pelvic pain, menstrual pain, or infertility caused by endometriosis.
- **SanoLiving:** A business that offers a holistic approach to mid-life women's health by combining expert care with AI technology, aiming to empower women to thrive during menopause and hormonal changes while breaking societal taboos associated with menopause symptoms.
- **Neuraura:** A platform facilitating improved surgical decisions, enhancing patient experiences, and offering personalized brain care and neuromodulation treatments, with the development of LOOOP, a device designed to provide on-demand localized stimulation for individuals with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome.

On the consumer-packaged goods side, the pitching companies were:



- **Bfree Cup:** The creator of a sustainable, affordable and user-friendly period product – the Bfree cup.
- **Revol Cares:** The developer of absorbent leakproof underwear period products that are toxin-free, ethically made and environmentally sustainable.
- **Marlow:** The creator of the first lubricated tampon that is 100 per cent cotton and mess-free.
- **Apricotton:** A maker of bras targeted to young girls that are designed to adjust as they grow.

And the winners were… drumroll please... Afynia and Bfree! The winning companies won non-dilutive funding in the amount of $37,000 and in-kind legal services from BLG.

What do all these companies have in common? Intrinsic motivation to advance their cause and the desire to provide solutions to improve women’s health. The companies provide solutions for women from pre-teen to the menopause and everywhere in between.

One of Femtech Canada’s strategic pillars is to build an ecosystem of people working to advance women’s health. This event accomplished exactly that, bringing together innovators, startups and investors to connect, meet and build partnerships.

The conversation isn’t stopping here. Driven By Women and Femtech Canada are looking forward to all the advancements that come from these important partnerships and to more Femtech Canada events in the future.

By

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Expertise

Health Care & Life Sciences, Driven By Women™

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