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Joining us today is John Farlinger the CEO of Assure Holdings the trades on our OTCQB Venture Market under the ticker "ARHH." Based in Colorado Assure Holdings works with neurosurgeons and orthopedic spine surgeons to provide services that support intra-operative neuromonitoring activities during invasive surgeries. John thanks so much for joining us today.

John Farlinger

Cecilia. Thank you, it's a pleasure to be back again this year

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So John last year you joined us for a discussion to introduce a sheer story to our listeners and we're very pleased to have you back for an update. Remind our audience again what intra-operative neuromonitoring also known as IONM is and can you provide an overview of the practice.

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John Farlinger

Sure well intra-operative neuromonitoring is really the use of electrophysiological methods to help surgeons and operating teams manage patient care during highly invasive surgeries. And what we do is we put an intra-operative neuromonitoring technologist into the operating room. Typically they're working on a spine orthopedic a complicated neuro surgery. We're now expanding into vascular and ENT surgeries and so essentially we're putting a tech into the ah or who's working with the surgical team. Additionally, we have a neurologist who's working remotely and the neurologist is working in tandem with our technologist and the surgery. And really guiding the surgery during typically what is a highly and can be a highly complex and invasive surgery. Um, it's pretty straightforward. We've grown this business significantly over the last 2 to 3 years and. It's resonating with surgeons as we continue to expand we started in Colorado as you've mentioned and we're now in 10 states in the United States we did almost 10000 surgeries last year and were on target to do over 17000 managed procedures this year

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So how vital has this technology been in raising the bar of ensuring patient safety and specifically how a sure has a competitive advantage in this industry.

John Farlinger

Well I think great question. You know as we look at the market. Our business is really focused around patient care and ensuring the safety of patients during these surgeries and think we've done a great job of going out and evangelizing the value of our business There's a reason why we are growing at the rate we are growing and most of our competitors are just holding on to market share if not showing negative growth and it really comes down to really the standard of care and. Interoperative Neuro maundering is recognized now as a standard of care during highly complex and invasive surgeries and I probably didn't articulate enough but we're doing a number of things during the surgery we're looking at the effect of the surgery on the patient's body. We're looking at an aesthetic and aesthetical effects of anesthesia on the patient we're looking at the effect of neural activity and we're really trying to stop any type of deficit from taking place or damage happening to the patient and this is why we are being paid by insurance companies and the hospitals. There's clearly a causal effect. Of us being in the operating room environment and improving patient care and that's really been our mantor for last 2 to 3 years

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And where does a sure see the intra-operative neuromonitoring industry going.

John Farlinger

There are a number of moving pieces as we look at the market and the market overall will continue to grow. What's driving growth is an aging population an increasing number of chronic disorders. And a continued adoption of intra-operative neuromonitoring from what was originally spine primarily and into other verticals. You know we've seen good growth in orthopedic and neurosurgeries and now we're looking at. Continued growth in vascular and ear nose and throat surgeries going forward and so we're seeing growth in the

number of surgeries but also within the verticals within those surgeries and in particular well I'll highlight it again in invasive surgeries I think as you look at the other things that we are most focused on. It's really around partnering with the payors and the insurance companies evangelizing our value so that we can be paid and to that end we are working. We're unique in that we are working on contracting directly with the insurance companies. And obtaining in-network agreements and I'm happy to say that we're close to you know, almost thirty percent of our volume now into direct and indirect agreements with the payers and our target is to have 50% of our volume by the end of the year in direct agreements I think the other thing that we are very focused on and. You know we've went out and we've made it clear to the market that we want to be in the tellal space and to that end what that means is that we are providing our own neurologists to work not only on our cases and our procedures rather than outsourcing to other companies. But also it's a service that we can monitor and really improve quality of service but also sell and go out and market to hospitals surgical centers. You know covid has put you know a tremendous pressure on the us healthcare system many smaller. Regional hospitals are under tremendous cost cutting initiatives now where they've got to reduce costs and we see this as a tremendous opportunity to really build a neurologist service around a telehealth platform. We've started that we've hired our first neurologist and sorry we hired our first audiologist. Hired our second neurologist and our plans by the end of the year to have 6 to 8 full-time neurologists working on our own business. But ultimately we want to be marketing our services to the hospitals and even other competitors and so we're very focused on that and lastly, it's about growing and.

John Farlinger

You know, many of our competitors in the market to date has put into a battle of friction with the pay ors. We're going the opposite way we're focused on partnering with them and evangelizing our services to them so they understand the true value of what we do. And really leading ourselves into in network contracting with them and then and that's guaranteeing payment and margin guarantees going forward does that help a little bit in terms of how we're reviewing the market.

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Great to hear how well is this sure poised for future growth, especially with recently entering into some refinancing with Centurian Financial Trust.

John Farlinger

Yeah, yeah, you probably saw the recent press release where we announced an \$11,000,000 facility was Centurian. They were a financial institutional investor from Canada and we were happy to use that. Capital to essentially refinance used a portion of it to take out some existing debt. But really the capital is being earmarked to help us with continued and accelerated organic growth in the second part of the year expand our telehealth services. And also, to continue to improve quality of service and research you know a key part of our growth is really and our and our values here are focused around quality of service. We hired an education director last year we're putting a lot of capital behind education. We set up our own program to recruit students out of major universities and putting them through a training process which we call the assure way which really guarantees us a flow of certified intra-operative neuromonitoring technologists going forward. So that's really the capital and the growth capital here from censuring is really all focused on debt on growth going forward.

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And I know you mentioned the Covid 19 pandemic earlier and how that had a big effect on just overall you know the whole lifestyle and you know whole industry as a whole but you know as we start to return to some normalcy, did these have any you know effects on sparking initiatives to further grow assure in the coming years.

John Farlinger

Yeah, yeah, it did like most like many businesses the United States and certainly in the healthcare space. We were significantly impacted by Covid last year we had staff but became ill we were a lot of our staff were frontline workers. And surgery centers in hospitals a number of them became ill fortunately they were all able to successfully work through that and navigate through it but last March, April and may we had a significant downturn in our volume. I think in April we were down about 70% in procedure volume. And

that lingered on through most of 2020 and it was really only in the first quarter of 2021 the things that returned to it to a sense of normalcy and we're seeing that now and the other thing that covid did it. you know. with addition to you know reduction in in procedures certainly the only the only surgeries that were taking place were ones that were urgent at various points in last year but really it's opened things up now with covid declining it's really opening up business. And in a lot of cases surgeons that wanted to work with us hospitals that wanted to work with us simply were too busy last year to look at new commercial agreements and we're in. We're accelerating those discussions now as things get back to normal.

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Assure began trading on the OTCQB Venture Market in February of 2019 and is also traded on the TSX-V how do you continue to leverage your OTCQB market investor strategy in the US.

John Farlinger

Well, we're pretty excited about using the OTCQB. A challenge for Assure, you know we're a US health care story or a high growth story developing right now. And we trade on the Canadian exchange where you have an audience that doesn't really understand the Canadian health care market. It was a challenge to go out and articulate and explain our story in our history and the opportunity and what's happened over the last twenty-four months is as we've continued to leverage the OTC it's really changed the profile of investor of our of our investors where most of our trading now is taking place in the United States and we expect that to continue. In fact, it's significantly more trading in the United States than in Canada. And then going forward. We're going to continue to expand our investor base here in the United States and ultimately there'll be a pretty much complete migration of most of the investors from Canada to the United States as we look ahead. We're going to continue to leverage conferences invest outreach I know we've got a number of conferences including the life sciences conference coming up where we're going to continue to get out and evangelize our story but it's certainly been an inhibitor out of the gate being on the Toronto Venture Exchange and being a US story and tried to market it as such and so you know it's been a great experience for us and it and it's certainly helped us get access to a lot more investors.

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And well thanks so much John for the updates and always a pleasure to speak with you.

John Farlinger

Thanks Cecilia and if anyone is interested they can certainly follow us on www.assureneuromonitoring.com. Thank you everyone.

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Assure Holdings trades under the symbol “ARHH” on our OTCQB Venture Market.

**This is an autogenerated transcript and may contain typos.*