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## Urgent care center operator adding 2 sites, dozens of jobs in Philadelphia

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Health care entrepreneur Peter Hotz's plans to open a network of Philadelphia-based urgent care centers is moving ahead this month with the opening of two new care sites, one in Center City and the other in South Philadelphia.

Those sites on Chestnut and Broad streets will join two other urgent care centers his company — which has changed its name to Vybe Urgent Care — already in operation in Roxborough and Port Richmond.

The company previously operated as On Demand Urgent Care.

"The name change speaks to the feel we want for our centers," said Hotz, speaking from the company's new Chestnut Street center, where an orange and green color scheme



JOHN GEORGE

Vybe Urgent Care President Peter Hotz at the company's soon-to-open Chestnut Street site.

dominates. “We want people to feel better the second they walk in. Our centers are brighter than your average urgent care center. They are clean, but not stark.”

Vybe plans to open two to three more centers this year. Hotz said the center’s average 12 to 15 employees per site, meaning the company will be creating anywhere from 48 to 75 new jobs in the city this year.

The Philadelphia region has experienced a steady surge in the opening of urgent care centers — facilities designed as an alternative to crowded emergency rooms or doctor’s offices for people with non-life-threatening illnesses or injuries — since Independence Blue Cross, the region’s largest health insurer, added such facilities to its provider networks five years ago.

### ***No slowing for urgent care centers***

Hotz said Vybe plans to distinguish itself from the more than 120 competing urgent care centers operated in this region by health systems, doctors and other entrepreneurs by offering customer-oriented amenities such as free coffee and Wi-Fi, a tablet check-in process and larger exam rooms to accommodate families.

His goal is to create a “spa-like” atmosphere for all of the Vybe urgent care centers.

“Most people who visit an urgent care clinic don’t want to be there,” he said. “They’re sick or injured, nervous, and perhaps anxious about the cost of their treatment.”

Hotz said Vybe centers will always have board-certified physicians on site at its centers, a claim not all local urgent care centers and retail-based health clinics can make.

Vybe is also targeting the city, exclusively, for its network of centers.

“The suburbs have been pretty well penetrated, but in the city there are still many neighborhoods where there is a large need for accessible and affordable care,” Hotz said, in **an interview with the Business Journal last year after acquiring** the On-Demand Urgent Care Centers in Roxborough and Port Richmond.

Hotz declined to disclose specific locations he has targeted for the company's next centers because he is still in the process of finalizing lease agreements.

Alan Ayers, vice president of strategic initiatives with Practice Velocity, an Illinois-based urgent care industry services firm, said as the competition among urgent care center operators has increased, providers need to take steps to be more patient-friendly. Locating centers in busy commercial areas — which is what Vybe is doing with its new centers on the 1400 block of Chestnut Street and the 1200 block of South Broad Street — is one strategy.

"The current iteration of urgent care centers is more a consumer-driven phenomenon that started about 10 years ago," Ayers said. "People like that convenience of getting care next door to the Starbucks or Chipotle."

### ***Tandigm Health transitions to new CEO***

Before creating Vybe Urgent Care, Hotz was president of Take Care Health Systems, the health care division of Walgreens.

As he has embarked on expanding the company's network of centers, Hotz said what has surprised him most is how so many patients remain unfamiliar with the concept of urgent care. "

We've had people come into our centers who are having a heart attack," he said. "They shouldn't be going there. People don't always know when they should be going to the hospital and when they could go to a doctor's office or an urgent care center. We still have a lot of education to do."

Vybe's Chestnut Street location is scheduled to open Jan. 19. Its South Philadelphia site is set to open Jan. 26.

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