



**Sector:**  
Health

**Funding stage:**  
Seed

**Website:**  
joinoto.com

## What is it?

Oto Health has developed an app that provides access to affordable, digital Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help reduce the effects of tinnitus. One in eight people in the US and UK are affected by this condition, suffering a constant ringing in the ears for months, years or sometimes even an entire lifetime. The condition is permanent and incurable, with no medication or operation that can treat it.

Oto's programme teaches users CBT tools that train the brain to respond differently to sound. It employs more than 100 sounds, recorded by Oto's own sound engineers, to gradually change the neural network. This reduces the effect of the ringing, where it's no longer noticed in a process called habituation.

These techniques are proven to be the most effective therapy for tinnitus used by award winning and internationally renowned tinnitus therapist, Anna Pugh, who designed the programme.

## Why we like it

CBT is the gold standard in therapy but typically involves expensive one-on-one sessions. Oto's approach uses simple but specially developed techniques that make the process much lower in cost, creating a global, scalable market.

The company is pursuing a multi-channel distribution route, launching as direct to consumer and expanding through B2B2C partnerships. The timing is perfect, as there are some exciting tailwinds across both the UK and the US.

In the US, hearing aid devices can now be sold over the counter, so Oto aims to partner with manufacturers to bundle the app with their hardware. Meanwhile, in the UK, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has backed CBT as the best way to tackle tinnitus and is looking for ways to make it more widely available.

## Who are we backing?

The two founders, Dr Edmund Farrar & Dr George Leidig, are ex-military medical doctors who have experienced tinnitus first hand. They have worked with many people who developed tinnitus having been exposed to loud weapons and aircraft noise, so understand the limitations of the current therapy options.

The company spent three months going through the prestigious Y-Combinator accelerator program in the US, which is well known for its impressive alumni of companies including Airbnb, Stripe, Dropbox, and Quit Genius (another Octopus Ventures portfolio company).



**What our fund managers say**  
**Kamran Adle - Principal**

"We believe this has the potential to scale CBT to help people to self-manage and live with tinnitus at a fraction of the current cost. It could be a medical game changer."

## Key risks

While we are really excited about this company's potential, please bear in mind that like all early stage businesses, it's likely to encounter both challenges and opportunities along the way and ultimately may not be successful.

Early stage investing is considered high risk and your capital may be lost. Any associated tax benefits are subject to qualification, personal circumstances and legislation.