

Dr. Darren Sommer
Innovator Health
Jonesboro, Arkansas

[Innovator Health](#) is a veteran' owned telemedicine technology company based in Jonesboro, Ark.

Dr. Darren Sommer, founder, serves as the chief executive officer and chief medical officer. Sommer is an internal medicine physician. His start in telemedicine followed a deployment to Afghanistan in 2006.

Sommer, a 25-year military veteran, serves as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves. In addition to his medical background, he also holds a master's degree in public health and an MBA from Duke's Fuqua School of Business.



“When I returned home to North Carolina following a 2006 deployment in Afghanistan where I treated very sick patients in austere environments, I started working in rural areas of the state and saw a lot of the same challenges there that I'd seen in Afghanistan. As a physician, my concerns included both how to deliver healthcare services and how do I tell somebody they have cancer or that their mom has dementia when I'm talking to them on a Skype or a Zoom-like system?” said Sommers.

From that point, Sommers' focus in telemedicine was on creating a technology that would allow healthcare to be delivered in rural communities and using life-sized, 3-D systems that provide patients with direct eye contact.

In 2020, Innovator Health won a \$900,000 contract through the Department of Defense Air Force Small Business Innovation Research program to build the SURVIVOR, a lightweight yet rugged and simple-to-operate telemedicine system.

Through SURVIVOR, the company will provide the military with an alternative treatment platform for healthcare. IH also intends to bring this technology to rural hospitals in the civilian market to provide broader services for local patients. The company already provides telemedicine technology and services to 24 rural hospitals.

Sommer and Dennis Kopp, IH chief operating officer, engaged the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center for help preparing their DoD Air Force SBIR Phase II application.

“The ASBTDC has been instrumental in assisting us with covering gaps in our knowledge base. There are so many elements to working with the military that can be frustrating. Having a knowledgeable partner like the ASBTDC made the process run much smoother. Additionally, they are very easy to work with and super accessible,” Sommer said.