

Revolutionising life insurance: The impact of Momentum's AI-powered health assessment

 By [Katja Hamilton](#)

28 Aug 2023

Biometric facial scanning technology is changing the way life-insurance applications are processed. Momentum, as the first South African life insurer to adopt this innovation as part of its underwriting process, now offers clients the ability to extract real-time medical data within 90 seconds using just their smartphones.



Source: [Pexels](#)

When clients apply for life insurance with Momentum, they receive an SMS link from a financial advisor. This link provides access to a personalised underwriting journey through the company's Kimi app.

One of the groundbreaking features of this journey is LifeReturns, an application that utilises various objective sources of data to assess a client's health and identify potential long-term health risks. Unlike traditional industry practices that involve nurses visiting the client's home to measure vitals and draw blood, clients can now use their smartphone's camera.

Thanks to patented face-detection and tracking technology, Momentum can extract a comprehensive dataset of vital signs, including heart rate, blood pressure, blood-oxygen saturation levels, respiration rates, and even levels of mental stress, all in less than two minutes.

Based on the results, a confirmed discount on life-insurance premiums is calculated and offered upfront, and the quote delivered in one seamless process. Thereafter, the app serves as a repository not only of the person's identity but of their health data. Once a year, clients will be required to update their vitals using the same app, with the platform providing year-on-year comparative results of their health data.

"The beauty of this system is that it delivers accurate results time and time again, and because the process is done in the comfort of a client's home, their blood-pressure results are not tainted by white coat syndrome, which shows up elevated blood pressure due to anxiety in medical settings.

"Stress or fear triggers it, causing temporarily high readings," says Michael Mol, a medical doctor with interests in emergency medicine and HIV management, and founder of Hello Doctor - a company that supplies telemedicine consultations to Momentum members.



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"It's crucial to distinguish it from chronic hypertension to prevent unnecessary treatment, and the digital capabilities of the LifeReturns platform can do just that, which is imperative given that high blood pressure is a silent killer in South Africa," Mol says.

Unlocking the science

Brainchild of the project is executive head of Momentum Myriad, Stephen van Niekerk who drove the development of the technology. He explains that the science driving this new product is photoplethysmography (PPG), a non-invasive medical technique used to measure changes in blood volume in the microvascular bed of tissue.

It works on the principle that blood absorbs light differently than surrounding tissues, he said. When blood flows through the small blood vessels near the skin's surface, it modulates the amount of light that is absorbed by the tissue.

As the volume of blood in these vessels changes with each heartbeat, the amount of light absorbed also changes. This variation in light absorption is used to measure blood flow and the other physiological parameters referred to in the LifeReturns underwriting experience.

“ PPG and rPPG have become increasingly popular in recent years. What exactly are they and how are they reshaping the health and wellness industries? Read more in our latest post ➡ <https://t.co/8Uz26WDqFY#rPPG #PPG #ai #digitalhealth>— binah.ai (@binah_ai) August 15, 2023 ”

Momentum and Binah.ai join forces

LifeReturns marks the start of a partnership between Binah.ai, an AI-powered video health monitoring tool provider, and Momentum, initiated in February 2021. While LifeReturns was officially introduced in its pilot phase to financial advisers in October last year, the product was launched in Gauteng in April and kickstarted in Cape Town last month.

"We welcome Binah.ai's technology as part of our vision to provide more health to more South African's for less. It provides our clients with a tool to measure key vitals and offers us alternative sources of health data to assist with early intervention and referral to our digital doctors if needed," says Margot Brews, head of health risk management at Momentum.

"We are happy and proud to work with a leading player such as Momentum and to help people in South Africa and beyond

enjoy the many benefits of our combined technologies.

"We look forward to the many great features we will keep adding and their use with Momentum clients," says David Maman, co-founder and chief executive officer of Binah.ai.

"Kimi screening and Binah.ai's technology is highly valuable as we envision new opportunities to help our clients intelligently monitor their health and support them with personalised, preventive care solutions. The interactive risk model enables early identification of risk and importantly opens a window of opportunity in which we can intervene to create vital links to care."



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LifeReturns: A glimpse into the future

The impacts of the use of the LifeReturns product are profound and expansive. Currently, the technology is poised for a significant transformation as it moves towards gaining FDA approval, which is expected to occur within the next few months, Mol said.

"Once FDA-approved, the LifeReturns product will transition from being purely informational to diagnostic in nature."

This means that it will not only provide valuable health data but also assist healthcare professionals in diagnosing various health conditions and assessing the overall health of individuals. The implications of this development are far-reaching:

The technology will generate a wealth of data on individuals' health trends over time. This data can be used to provide personalised recommendations for improving health and managing chronic conditions. Potentially health insurers and public-health authorities can leverage the data to gain insights into population health trends and develop targeted interventions.

Says Brews, "This significantly increases the delivery of essential healthcare services to anyone, no matter how far they are away from a medical consulting room, just by using a smartphone."

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

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