



PHARMA PRESCRIBED .COM

NEWSLETTER · IN CONVERSATION WITH STEVEN THOMPSON

Compliance isn't a constraint

Steven Thompson — from airline maintenance to founder of Next Trial AI — on treating regulation as architecture, making trial start-up predictable, and the personal reason he wants patients to see the whole picture before they consent.

Steven Thompson learned about regulated environments long before pharma — on complex maintenance operations for American Airlines, governed by the FAA, where he arrived at a conviction that has driven everything since: compliance isn't a constraint, it's an architecture. From aviation to Embraer's supply chain, to Biogen and Takeda, to founding Next Trial AI, he's been building the scaffolding that makes complex, high-stakes work predictable.



Compliance isn't a constraint. It's an architecture.

— Steven Thompson, on Pharma Prescribed

Deleting the maze

Next Trial's pitch is bold: rather than optimise the regulatory maze of trial start-up, delete it — 'trial activation intelligence' aimed at getting a study trial-

ready in thirty days, with zero-rejection packets and faster, cleaner activation. His years across aviation and pharma supply chains taught him that the unglamorous, back-office parts of a process are exactly where the time and the risk hide.

A personal why

The drive is personal. Steven describes his father's clinical trial — the hope, the eligibility matching, the informed consent — all built on static data that never asked the harder question: could he actually tolerate the trial, and where were his labs heading? Dynamic data, he argues, would have shown he'd become ineligible months in, and let him make a genuinely informed choice upfront. Wanting patients to see that whole picture before they consent is what much of his work is about.

AI you can audit

His answer isn't a black box. He talks about physics-informed, verified AI where every decision, recommendation and gap is logged, auditable and cited back to specific regulatory clauses. In a field rightly wary of confident-sounding machines, that insistence on traceability is the point — the same architecture mindset, applied to the algorithm itself.



Listen to the full episode

Steven Thompson on Pharma Prescribed — at pharmaprescribed.com
and wherever you get your podcasts.

Steven Thompson *is the founder of Next Trial AI and a voice at the intersection of AI, trial activation and human-centred design.*