

IS THERE A (VIRTUAL) DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

A visit to the doctor's is a thing of the past as Teleme raises their game in telemedicine.

By Bernie Yeo

(Front row from left) Mark Choo, Dr Hoh Hon Bing, and Kevin Ong with the Teleme team



From finding a parking spot in busy hospitals or clinics to having to put up with long waits at the doctor's office, a visit to the doctor's can be an exhausting, time-consuming experience for many, especially in a fast-paced society like the one we live in today. This is all changing, thanks to the rise of telemedicine, which is becoming a key technology that is shaping the future of healthcare even here in Malaysia.

What is perhaps the most

intriguing notion about telemedicine is the fact that it allows you to consult with your doctor wherever you are – from the comfort of your own home via the use of electronic communications.

Smart Investor recently caught up with Dr Hoh Hon Bing, one of the founders of Teleme to discuss the online healthcare platform's wide range of services, and how the local start-up is gradually changing the way essential healthcare needs are being dispensed to Malaysians.

What Is Teleme?

Teleme is an online platform that uses technology to bridge the gap between health practitioners and patients, and aims to provide convenient access to essential healthcare needs. It offers online chat messenger and video consultations, along with the dispensation of medication from any of its partnering pharmacies.

The People Behind Teleme

Teleme was founded by three individuals: Dr Hoh Hon Bing, Dr Aqeel Ahamad, and Mark Choo.

Dr Hoh is an ophthalmologist who has been in private practice for over 15 years. He is involved in advising on management and the business direction of the organisation, and is in charge of the on-boarding process for doctors to come on board Teleme.

Dr Aqeel, meanwhile, completed his medical degree in Ireland, and is currently doing his housemanship at the University of Malaya Medical Centre.

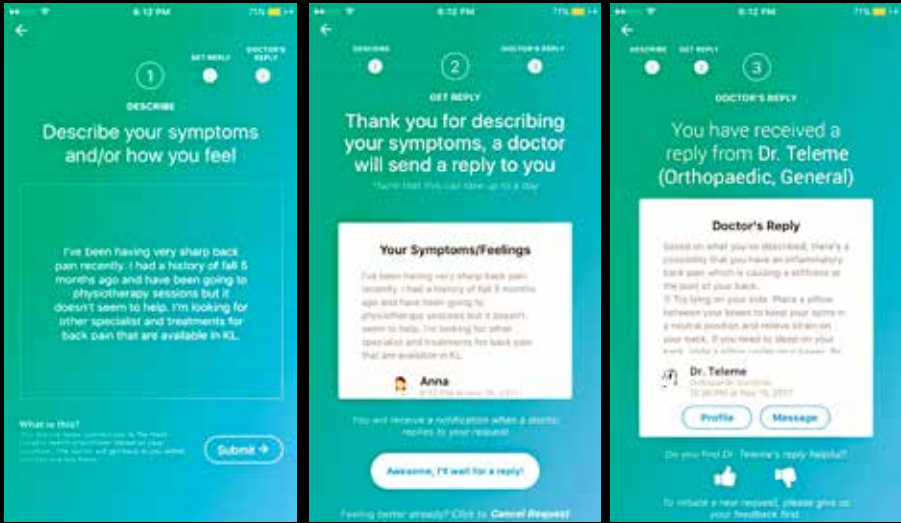
Mark, on the other hand, is involved in leading and executing the overall operations and resources decisions and business direction. A Business Administration major who graduated from University of San Francisco, he is also involved in pitching for strategic and business partnerships for Teleme.

Available Services

1 Online consultation with doctors and other health practitioners

- i. Messenger – This feature allows you to communicate and attach pictures of your physical condition or documents such as your past medical records to send to your doctors or other healthcare practitioners;
- ii. Video call – Users can show their physical condition (if any) live via webcam. Users can also engage in live

HOW DOES TELEME WORK?



The image displays three sequential screenshots of the Teleme mobile application interface. The first screen, titled 'DESCRIBE', prompts the user to 'Describe your symptoms and/or how you feel' and provides a text input area where a sample description of back pain is entered. The second screen, titled 'GET REPLY', shows a confirmation message and a 'Submit' button. The third screen, titled 'DOCTOR'S REPLY', displays a response from 'Dr. Teleme (Orthopaedic, General)' and includes a 'Profile' button. The interface is clean with a teal and white color scheme.

- 1 To enjoy Teleme's services, simply sign up for an account online. For users who are unsure about which doctor or health practitioner to consult, they can use the 'Find me a Doctor' feature and list down their symptoms or health questions.
- 2 Teleme will then connect them to the most suitable doctor or health practitioner. Teleme will then connect them to the most suitable doctor, and if the user would like to continue chatting with the doctor, they can opt to chat with them via messenger, or do a video call.
- 3 Once the user has consulted a doctor, the user can then proceed to purchase their medication or blood test through their partner pharmacies and health labs. Using Teleme, the doctor is also able to arrange blood tests online for his/her patients. The blood test results will be sent online directly to the doctor.

conversations with doctors through this online consultation platform.

2 Extensive health screening or blood test – Teleme has partnered with Pathlab Malaysia for a health screening and blood test package, and depending on the user's condition, doctors can schedule a blood test, and the user can then select the nearest PathLab and purchase the blood test via Teleme's platform. To do the blood test, users can go to the selected branch with the invoice during opening hours.

3 Medical or refill prescription – Doctors can prescribe medication to users on Teleme's platform, and once the doctor has prescribed the medication, users can then select the partner pharmacy

closest to them and purchase their medication. Users can also opt to have their medication delivered, although this service is currently available for those residing within the Klang Valley.

Areas of Medical Specialty

With the aim of building a complete ecosystem of doctors, Teleme does not have a particular area of medical specialty and has, instead, a wide range of specialists.

"We are currently focused on bringing more psychologists/ counsellors on board, and we have plans to expand this network due to the growing number of requests and help on mental health issues," Dr Hoh explains, adding with the platform, they have helped a

lot of users who suffered or struggled with mental health problems through online counselling with psychologists.

There are almost 300 healthcare practitioners on board including non-medical professionals such as audiologists, psychology counsellors, physiotherapists, dieticians and nutritionists as well as medical specialists.

"We do not employ any of our doctors to ensure that there is no conflict of interest. We simply believe that patients are best looked after by their own choice of doctors, and Teleme is designed to help these healthcare professionals manage their patients more efficiently by being connected online," says Dr Hoh.

Future Endeavours

With demand already picking up, Teleme's services have been rolled out throughout other parts of Malaysia, with partner pharmacies located in Seremban, Port Dickson, Kuantan, Terengganu and Pahang, and partner health labs in Penang and Johor. However, medication delivery service is only available within the Klang Valley, with future plans to continue expanding to other parts of the country.

"We foresee a long journey ahead for Teleme," said Dr Hoh. "We will continue to raise awareness to the public about telemedicine and how everyone can now gain access to essential medical services, and strive to provide the right guidance and solution to all their health concerns." 