



MAKING IT SIMPLE

If you own a health or fitness wearable – be it a Fitbit, Jawbone or Garmin – that hasn't ended up in a drawer after a few months of use, you are the minority. Or so says Snehal Patel (above), co-founder of Singapore-based healthcare app MyDoc. According to the physician turned entrepreneur, limitations of wearables have rendered consumers asking how they can be more involved in their health beyond just counting steps taken and hours slept. It is these very limitations that partly motivated the creation of MyDoc. Launched in 2012, MyDoc seeks to improve overall accessibility to health care by better connecting the four parts of the healthcare ecosystem – patients, professionals, partners and payers. MyDoc has reportedly even inspired a development by an American counterpart – a point of pride for the Asian-focused startup.

AS TOLD TO JACQUELYN CHEOK

WHAT IS MYDOC?

Dr. Patel: We simplify health care. For the first time, patients can access care from all sorts of providers, ranging from doctors to pharmacies to chronic disease administrators, all from one application. Providers have the benefit of connecting with each other and with their patients, all from one simple application. And payers, ranging from employers to insurers, have a way to lower their healthcare costs by encouraging their employees to use one application.

We have over 1,500 professionals, close to 10,000 patient users, and are active in four countries: Singapore, Malaysia, India and the Philippines.

WHAT INSPIRED MYDOC?

MyDoc was the culmination of over three decades worth of experience in health care in various countries around the world. We are unique as a founding team in that we have experience in health care as investors, entrepreneurs and clinical practitioners. One realisation that came to us was the fact that health care is extremely siloed – data that people need for their basic daily needs reside in multiple different hospitals, apps, devices.

Additionally, once you leave the hospital, connecting with the people involved in managing your health – your general practitioner, your dietician etc – are all spread out and rarely interact with each other. We wanted to come up with a simple, powerful system to allow for connected communication and data among providers, patients and payers.

WHO IS BEHIND MYDOC?

The MyDoc founders are both physicians: one Singaporean and one American. That makes us incredibly rare – only 5 per cent of digital healthcare startup leaders are physicians according to a report in *Forbes* – but gives us a huge advantage in understanding the nuances of the healthcare market that have traditionally been very difficult for outsiders to understand and thus resistant to change.

HOW IS MYDOC UNIQUE FROM OTHER INTEGRATED HEALTH PLATFORMS?

We are unique in that we concentrate on making the existing healthcare infrastructure more efficient. We are more than just an app, we are a full-featured platform that connects the four parts of the healthcare ecosystem together: patients, partners, payers and professionals.

We spent a lot of time making sure that what we developed was relevant for Asia, and are not just a copy of a model from elsewhere. If you look at the ageing population, decreasing number of children and increased chronic disease burden in a country like Singapore, there are applications here that we felt were more relevant to the various parts of the healthcare ecosystem.

HOW IS MYDOC AN ASIA REPRESENTATIVE?

It may be a stretch to say that we inspired companies in the US, but we took pleasure in one particular fact: We announced last October, in joint-partnership with Guardian Health and Beauty, a service to provide online consultations to customers of Guardian that were visiting their e-commerce site. In December, to much fanfare in Washington DC, the large American pharmacy chain Walgreens announced a similar service in conjunction with MDLive, a company that has recently closed a US\$50 million financing round. While it would be a fair stretch to say that we inspired that development, it should definitely be a point of pride for us in the Asian startup ecosystem. Asian startups have long been caricatured as being simple clones of US startups. At least in this case, we in Asia can say that we led the development in America.

WHAT IS THE OUTLOOK FOR HEALTH CARE?

The wearable trend has helped people become far more aware of their health and opened them up to being able to manage their health online. Ironically, it is the limitations of wearables that have left consumers asking how they can become more involved in their health beyond just counting steps, and also why the majority of wearables end up in a drawer after a few months of use. That is where we come in. By building a connected ecosystem of providers, labs and diagnostic facilities, we make it extremely easy for consumers to engage in managing their health conditions. ■

