



## *Online Health Dispenser*

MSC-status [ehealth4all.com](http://ehealth4all.com) is looking out for our health by providing us over-the-counter healthcare products online. *By Hanani Izzati*

**E**ver experienced the mother of all headaches where your head is threatening to explode at any minute? And on top of that, you're fresh out of Panadols. So, you brave the equatorial heat and drive to the nearest convenience store, circle the area for the umpteenth time for that elusive parking at the RM3.00 per entry parking and finally collapse at the counter clutching the Panadols.

Why torture yourself? Just log on to [www.ehealth4all.com](http://www.ehealth4all.com) and place the order online and have the Panadols delivered to your doorsteps for a small delivery charge of RM5.00, minus the hassle. However, for now, only residents of the Klang Valley have access to this 'luxury, cash-on-delivery' service provided by [ehealth4all.com](http://ehealth4all.com). And, for orders of RM100.00 and above, delivery charges are waived.

Envisioned to be the avant-grade Internet healthcare portal of Malaysia, ehealth4all.com strives to provide the most comprehensive, practical and user friendly e-solutions in healthcare to both its business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumers (B2C) clientele.

#### More than just selling online

ehealth4all.com was launched in March 2000 by its parent company, Pharmaniaga Bhd, that has a 15-year government concession to distribute medical supplies to 149 district and state general hospitals.

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“Apart from selling over-the-counter products to end consumers, we also provide information technology

(IT) solutions within the pharmaceutical industry. So we’re very much industry specific,” explained Wendy Lim, senior executive, marketing communications.

“The portal also provides useful information, services, and products related to healthcare. For example, if you want to know where the nearest pharmacy is or need more information on specific symptoms, you could find these information from our website,” she continued.

#### Increasing efficiency

“On the B2B side, we are focusing on our e-Procurement system, which

utilises the Internet in enabling B2B purchase and sale of services and supplies. Orders are placed online and will be directed to the suppliers through e-mail and we will negotiate on the pricing online,” informed Lim.

Since 1995, Pharma\*Net started to look at strengthening its position using the Internet and has spent a total of USD3.94 million (RM14.97 million) to create a smooth supply chain. The company facilitates the e-Procurement system by automating the Hospital Inventory System (HIS) that links 149 government hospitals and clinics to a central purchasing system managed by the Pharmaniaga Group.



*The ehealth4all.com team are working to ensure we get useful information, services and products related to healthcare at the click of a button.*



*ehealth4all.com is the pioneer healthcare portal in Malaysia and has a number of projects lined up to provide innovative services to its customers.*

“e-Procurement is not a totally new idea, it was born out of the need for practicality. What we wanted was to find a more efficient way to facilitate the HIS and we found the answer in automation,” said technology development executive Caroline Chin.

The conventional procurement process was gradually replaced by the online portal, which now connects users from the manufacturing, inventory management, warehousing, and logistics units through the Internet. The nature of the Internet allows the e-Procurement system to be more flexible, efficient and responsive to users’ needs and it also allows a high degree of user participation.

“ehealth4all.com came out of experience. Pharma\*Net proved to be effective, but it supports the hospital side only. eHealth is the bridge linking hospitals and suppliers,” added Lim.

“We also work very closely with Malaysia’s Ministry of Health (MOH) by providing relevant reports that contain important information to allow the MOH to plan for the yearly budget for healthcare in terms of drug usage,” explained Chin.

Another innovative service provided by ehealth4all.com is e-tender. True to its name, e-tender enables the entire conventional tendering process to be done online, allowing tender submissions, document purchases and award notifications to be done quickly and transparently.

It collates submitted tenders and generates a comprehensive comparative analysis 2 hours upon closing of the tender, saving 80 percent of the manual man-hours. Since May 2001, tenders worth more than USD7.9 million (RM30.02 million) have been awarded through e-tender.

#### **Favourable respond**

Being a pioneer in owning and maintaining a healthcare portal in Malaysia, ehealth4all.com has gained the confidence and support from established suppliers, both from local and international market.

“We have partnerships within the ASEAN countries. Some time ago we tied up with a company in Hong Kong in a technology transfer initiative,” said Chin. “On the B2C side, respond is picking up with almost a 70 per cent jump from the year 2000 to 2001. It is stabilising and we’re getting quite a few orders per day.”

Lim chipped in by saying that in selling online to end consumers, ehealth4all.com faces fierce competition from the conventional ‘brick-and-mortar’ pharmacies. “For a lot of people, shopping is not a chore, it’s pleasure and they enjoy physically going out to shop. Most of the customers who buy online are those who do not have easy access to physical pharmacies, such as in East Malaysia, Kota Bahru and Kuantan. But we are not afraid, because what they can offer, we can offer even better,” she said confidently.

#### **All geared up**

Set on fully utilising the capabilities of the Internet, ehealth4all.com has a number of projects lined up.

“We are already going into the e-marketplace and creating a centre for commercial trading and a centralised business information hub. Our hope is the e-marketplace will allow us to expand to more users of the pharmaceutical industry worldwide,” explained Chin. “At the moment we are also in talks with people outside Malaysia especially from the United States.”

Research and development is also high on the agenda for ehealth4all.com. Their team of web development programmers focuses on automation, as the company aims to convert more manual processes to automated processes. The main objective being to free up man-hours, reduce paperwork and ultimately achieve zero errors.

“We have a lot more projects which are still in discussion, when it’s mature, you’ll see it in the newspaper. But ‘automation’ is the name of the game,” laughed Chin.

Well, we’ll just have to wait and see then. ●