

Publication: Vulcan Post Online

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Headline: This S'porean launched another telemedicine startup in 9 months, this time focusing on women

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Health has always been at the forefront of what Ethel Tan does for work and in her personal time.

The Singapore Management University graduate has honed her passion into a career by becoming an indoor cycling instructor, and later took it a step further when she founded Noah — a discreet digital clinic for men — with her co-founder Sean Low back in June last year.

Fast forward nine months later, the duo launched Zoey in March 2021, which is a new telemedicine platform that caters to all aspects of women's healthcare.

"We knew we wanted to change the way people experienced quality healthcare, and especially in a time of a pandemic, the telemedicine game needed to step into the spotlight," said Ethel.

Birth control delivered in four hours



Ethel told Vulcan Post that when the circuit breaker was imposed in Singapore, she realised how inconvenient it was to get a simple refill on her birth control pills prescription.

It did not make sense to risk catching Covid-19 and going through stringent precautions just to get birth control from a clinic.

Even though there were existing players in the telemedicine field that offers birth control pills, the downside was that customers had to wait a day or two before receiving their prescriptions. Furthermore, their prices are rather steep.

This was why she felt that Zoey needed to be more convenient, and use the same four-hour free delivery model as Noah to bring a more affordable solution to women.

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Comparison with other female healthcare service providers in Singapore

The team knew how important privacy, speed and cost mattered to the patient experience, so they designed Zoey's entire company around it — from its online consultations to its free and discreet four-hour delivery service.

A gap in women's health offerings



Zoey however, is not solely focused on providing access to sexual healthcare. Instead, it aims to create new expectations of what women have come to expect of telemedicine.

At the product level, what differentiates the platform is its vision for striving to provide whole-of-health solutions to women.

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Looking at the online women's health clinic scene in Singapore, we noticed a gap in their service offerings — most focused on sexual health. We wanted to bring a more holistic approach to healthcare for women, on top of just the physical aspect.

Ethel Tan, co-founder of Zoey

While getting help for mental health is still largely taboo today, Ethel told Vulcan Post that her therapy sessions back in university proved to be very effective in helping her overcome the challenges she faced at that time.

However, after graduating and entering the workforce, she acknowledged that continuing therapy was “way too costly” for someone with a starting salary.

That was how she got the idea to go beyond sexual health, and encompass affordable mental health and other treatments into Zoey's suite of services.

According to Ethel, the team has seen a lot of latent interest in Zoey's mental health offerings, in part due to the current climate of uncertainty and having to isolate themselves from others for long periods of time.

Women are well-informed on healthcare solutions, so seeking treatment for them is nothing to be ashamed of. However, when it comes to more sensitive conditions, pertaining to sexual or even mental health, women tend to receive judgment from others. This is why Zoey makes it a point to keep everything confidential, valuing the privacy of all members.

Some of the other treatments currently available on Zoey include smoking cessation, acne and even hair loss.

Zoey is also listed on the Ministry of Health's (MOH) list of direct telemedicine providers, and has also managed to onboard a panel of medical experts.

One-stop platform for all things related to women's health

Telemedicine is not new, but its popularity has grown in leaps and bounds over the past year.

Before Covid-19, the industry was focused on convincing users to trust the platform and doctors that they could not see. However, telemedicine now provides accessible healthcare for consumers who are already conditioned to trust online services.

Even though Zoey is still a new player in the market at around two months old, it already counts a few thousand women in Singapore as its customers.

We're still trying to understand our customers better, figuring out what they need, but we're also seeing more sign-ups every day.

When it comes to scaling health solutions, we've learnt a lot through Noah, and we're placing those learnings to work here. Anecdotally, Zoey is growing at twice the pace Noah did, helping to define new expectations in the category.

Ethel Tan, co-founder of Zoey

“The goal for Zoey is to be a one-stop for all things women's health. We are continually working with doctors and medical advisors to improve and provide more services for our members, in order to meet all their health needs,” said Ethel.