App that lets men test for STDs at home bags top prize for student team

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Worried about the stigma of going to a clinic to be tested for a sexually transmitted disease (STD)?

A team of tertiary students are now working to enhance a mobile application to allow men who need such tests to do so in the privacy of their homes.

The app, which is male-specific, requires the user to submit a photo of his penis, after which artificial intelligence is used to detect any physical symptoms of an STD.

The team is now developing extra features on the app, such as a test kit being recommended to the user, who can purchase it and have it delivered to his home.

After the user submits a sample of either his urine or blood, a laboratory can carry out tests to confirm if he has an STD.

Yesterday, the team won the top prize of $20,000 in the Open category of the sixth Medical Grand Challenge at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Organised by the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, the annual event aims to encourage students across various universities in Singapore to come together and explore creative solutions for healthcare needs.

Students from universities in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand

The team behind the app that allows men to test for sexually transmitted disease in the privacy of their homes, which bagged them the top prize in the Open category of the Medical Grand Challenge. The members are (from left) Mr Christian Emmanuel Lim, Ms Chen Kai Yi, Mr Irving Shua, Ms Jaime Pang, Dr Yudara Kularathne, Ms Devan Pooja, Ms Anastasiia Tikhonova, and Mr Marcus Hooi. Another member, Mr Krongboonying Thanyaboon, was not present. ST PHOTOS: ALPHONSUS CHERN

Another team which won the top prize in the Nascent category for their video monitoring and analysis software that can detect early signs of autism in children. The members are (from left) Mr Alvin Tay, Ms Low Xi Zhi, Ms Alicia Chng, Ms Manisha Anbudurai, and Mr Kiran Prabakaran.

also took part in this year's contest.

The basic app, known as HeHealth, is the brainchild of NUS clinical instructor Yudara Kularathne, 41, who is mentoring the team of eight students from different schools and faculties, including a PhD pharmacy student from NUS and two students from the Renaissance Engineering Pro-

gramme at Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

Team leader Jaime Pang, 19, said the team chose to focus on STDs in particular because of the stigma surrounding the topic.

They hope the app will make STD testing more accessible and less of a taboo.

"We want to normalise conversa-

tions about STDs because people often keep their fears of having them pent up and refuse to get tested, because they are afraid of being judged," said the second-year medical student at NTU.

"This is dangerous as they could spread it to others unknowingly."

The team also plans to partner manufacturers of STD test kits and

roll out the app to the rest of Southeast Asia. No date has been set for the launch of the enhanced app.

The other winners include video monitoring and analysis software that can detect early signs of autism in children, and a 3D-printed Braille pad that can transform Braille text into audiobooks.

Health Minister Ong Ye Kung,

who was guest of honour, lauded the event for encouraging innovation. "All these efforts are an important signal to our students that with the knowledge that you know and the skills you learn, you can empower yourself to really make a difference," he said.

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