

Easy way to watch blood pressure

A HOMEGROWN technology, already widely recognised in other parts of the globe, is finally coming to town in a big way.

Next month, the BPro – a wristwatch-like device used to monitor blood pressure – will be made available to heartlanders.

A total of five centres, scattered across the island, will not just offer blood pressure monitoring, but also counselling and treatment to patients suffering from high blood pressure.

The centres will be manned by trained physiotherapists and health-care professionals.

While patients will have to pay for treatment, it will be significantly cheaper, said Dr Ting Choon Meng, a general practitioner and the inventor of the device.

Patients now pay at least \$175 for ambulatory blood pressure monitoring, which is used to determine high blood pressure.

BPro centres will offer it at about \$125.

A BPro watch costs about \$5,000 but patients need not buy the product.

Dr Ting said he hopes the clinics will help reduce the number of heart attack and stroke patients here.

High blood pressure affects one in five people here, often without any visible symptoms.

"But that does not mean they are not at risk of other diseases," explained Dr Ting.

"We can really do something about it," said the chief executive of HealthStats, which produces the device.

Launched in 2005, the invention has been approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration – a "gold standard" endorsement for medical devices.

The device employs a big-picture approach to blood pressure monitoring: clocking a 24-hour measurement.

Patients simply wear the watch for a day, then check back with their doctor.

The data allows doctors to spot abnormalities, and respond with the right medication, even for those who appear normal.

It is currently in use in the US, Britain and Australia.

Among users of the device are President S R Nathan, the royal family of Jordan and actor Jackie Chan.

Last year, it was awarded the prestigious Technology Pioneer award by the Swiss-based World Economic Forum – placing it in the same league as previous winners Google and Napster.

Yesterday, BPro was named Monitoring Device Technology Of The Year by health-care and research consultant, Frost & Sullivan, making HealthStats the only local company to receive an award in this category.

Held for the second consecutive year, the awards recognise companies in the Asia-Pacific region that have made significant contributions to the health-care community.



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