

GE unveils handheld ultrasound machine

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In this photo released by General Electric, GE Chairman and CEO Jeff Immelt unveils GE Healthcare's new Vscan, a pocket-sized ultrasound device, at the Web 2.0 Summit in San Francisco on Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2009. (AP Photo/General Electric)

(AP) -- The future of ultrasound technology, as interpreted by General Electric Co., looks a bit like a flip phone crossed with an iPod.

GE CEO Jeff Immelt unveiled a handheld ultrasound machine at the Web 2.0 Summit in San Francisco Tuesday called the Vscan, saying it could become the "stethoscope of the 21st century."

The device folds open clamshell-style to reveal a small screen on the top half and a circular button pad on the bottom. A small attached wand can

be used to generate a noninvasive scan of a patient's organs or of a fetus.

The Vscan is aimed in part at primary care doctors, who could use it instead of sending patients to get an ultrasound at a specialist's office. It could also be used by doctors in remote regions without access to hospital equipment.

Immelt said that the device, which will be available sometime next year, will be "very digitally capable" but that it will not have Wi-Fi access to wirelessly transmit ultrasound images.

The cost of the device is unknown.

During the summit, Immelt declined to elaborate on the possibility that Fairfield, Conn.-based GE will sell a stake in its NBC Universal entertainment division to cable TV operator Comcast Corp. or any other company. He said that GE is "comfortable" with the division.

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