Medical phone, vibrating earphone shine at trade show

June 17 2010, by Idayu Suparto

An exhibitor holds a EPI Life smartphone that can detect a person's abnormal heart rhythm, at the CommunicAsia 2010 conference and exhibition show in Singapore, on June 16.

Are you having chest pains and wondering if you should rush to hospital? The EPI Life, one of the gadgets on show at a Singapore trade fair, could be what you need.

At first glance, the 106-gram (3.7-ounce) touch-screen phone looks like any other fancy smartphone, but its tiny frame also holds an electrocardiogram (ECG) machine, which can put your heart reading literally at your fingertips.

An ECG, which can detect abnormal heart rhythms, is usually carried out at a hospital or clinic, but Chow U-Jin, medical director at Ephone

International, which developed the EPI Life, said the device is able to condense the whole ECG process onto a [mobile platform](link), making it a life-saving gadget.

And when it's not on medical duty, EPI Life works just like a normal phone.

"Inside this device there exists an ECG machine, which allows a non-medically trained person to perform an ECG by him or herself just by touching their fingers on the sides of the phone," he told AFP.

The person's chart is relayed to a 24-hour centre in Singapore and read by doctors and nurses. An assessment is delivered to the user within minutes with a text message, enabling prompt action where necessary.

"Instead of having to run off to a clinic whenever you have chest pains, you do the ECG immediately and that's where you have the maximum chance of capturing an abnormal rhythm," Chow said.

The phone, which has been launched in Singapore, is aiming to sell 10,000 to 15,000 units in Malaysia, Indonesia and Hong Kong by the end of this year.

A one-year price plan which includes the device and 10 ECG readings a month costs 1,686 Singapore dollars (1,200 US) before taxes.

Another gadget on display at the CommunicAsia 2010 conference and trade fair is an earphone made by South Korean firm Yeil Electronics.

It vibrates while plugged to the ear and its makers said this can reduce the stress on the eardrums by diverting up to 20 percent of the sound away.

"Our earphones come with vibrations so about 20 percent of the sound is travelling to the bone and the skin, not directly to the ear," said the firm's Singapore-based director David Kwon.

Launched in South Korea, the product is expected to be available in Southeast Asia by the end of this month, and the makers are hoping it will prove popular with videogamers looking for a realistic sound experience.

Lost your phone? No problem.

An application called WaveSecure can help users of mobile phones that run on the Android, Blackberry, Symbian and Windows Mobile operating systems track their lost devices and reclaim data.

Developed by a Singaporean firm called tenCube, WaveSecure allows users to retain control over their lost phones by remote control, said its business developer Saurabh Mandar.

"With the smartphone industry picking up so fast, the amount of information we have on our phones today is highly sensitive and it could be anything from our videos, our photos, our emails to our passwords to banks," Mandar said.

Through the software, a map of the location is provided when the phone is tracked and the owner can even view the phone's SIM card activity.

In addition to remotely locking the phone and wiping off their data, users can back up the information on a WaveSecure portal which has a storage capacity of up to two gigabytes.

Users also have the option of restoring the data to the device if it is recovered, or transfer the information to a new handphone.