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ASIA EDITION

Singaporean POC TeleMedC forms R&D partnership with German UKE center through scaler8

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The partnership aims to improve detection of potentially blinding and chronic diseases, as well as making retinal diagnostic technology more easily available to the underserved



TeleMedC, a Singaporean startup providing low-cost diagnostic solutions for point-of-care screening and virtual management of eye and chronic diseases, recently established a research and development (R&D) partnership with the Department of Ophthalmology at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE) in Hamburg, Germany. This partnership was enabled and facilitated by Scaler8, a market expansion partner specialised in positioning Asian startups and SMEs for success in the German market through tailored market exploration and access programs. The focus of the joint research project is on detection and grading of cataracts with the automated diagnosis of the most common retinal diseases, including glaucoma.

Macular degeneration, cataracts and glaucoma are the top three causes of blindness in Europe. These conditions are particularly prevalent among the elderly, which is cause for concern in Germany, where nearly half of the population is aged 40 years or older. However, early detection of these diseases significantly improves the chances of preventing blindness, making retinal diagnostics critical to preserving good eye health.

TeleMedC works with primary care providers, community clinics and pharmacies to deliver low-cost, fully automated, portable eye image grading technologies. These can be used to monitor for the diagnosis and prevention of chronic diseases such as diabetes, glaucoma, stroke, hypertension and macular degeneration. The company's diabetic retinopathy artificial intelligence (AI) was the first to be approved in Singapore and Australia, and it boasts an accuracy of 97 percent sensitivity and 92 percent specificity – making it one of the most accurate image diagnostic AI services in the world.

The project combines the detection and grading of cataracts as well as the automated diagnosis of glaucoma and other common retinal diseases. Besides improving detection of most potentially blinding diseases and increasing the chances of saving sight, the project could also contribute to easy, non-invasive detection of a large range of systemic diseases not related to the eyes, such as in the brain and the cardiovascular system. TeleMedC's low-cost technology could also make

sophisticated diagnostics accessible to the underserved, hence improving general population health.

In 2020, TeleMedC participated in Scaler8's 'Explore' programme, a structured 11-week market exploration programme to help companies enter the German market. Powered by German Entrepreneurship Asia, Scaler8 Explore supports aspiring Singaporean startups such as TeleMedC in identifying gaps and focus areas to prepare for market expansion to Germany. For TeleMedC, this resulted in the R&D collaboration with UKE – which has received a grant from the Investment and Development Bank in Hamburg – and led to TeleMedC opening a subsidiary in Germany. The company will set up their office at the-labs.space in Hamburg, where they will receive continued support from Scaler8 mentors who have been pivotal for the startup's journey so far.

As part of Scaler8's 'Expand' programme, TeleMedC will receive customised market entry support to further solidify its presence in the German market with on-ground business development efforts and business advisory. Scaler8 will also help set up a local team and customer support structures for TeleMedC to scale quickly in the German market.

Scaler8 is a programme by German Entrepreneurship Asia, a company that aims to bridge the innovation ecosystems of Asia and Europe. As a trusted partner of Enterprise Singapore's Global Innovation Alliance for Germany, Scaler8's customised programmes and services help Singaporean companies at various stages of readiness to create and execute a go-to-market strategy for successful expansion to Germany.

Image Caption: (l.t.r.)Claus Karthe, Co-Founder & CEO, German Entrepreneurship Asia; Kristin Eckert, Senior Programme Manager, Scaler8 and Teodora Georgieva, Programme Director, Scaler8