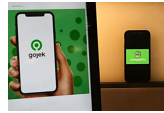




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Former telehealth CEO launches pet telemedicine ZumVet, raises seed funding

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ZumVet co-founders Grace Su (left) and Athena Lee, ex-CEO of Doctor Anywhere. PHOTO: ZUMVET

PET telehealth startup ZumVet, founded by former Doctor Anywhere chief executive officer (CEO) Athena Lee, has raised a seven-figure seed round led by Pine Venture Partners, a growth-stage venture capital firm with offices in Singapore and Seoul.

Pine Venture Partners previously backed smart locks startup igloocompany. Other investors in ZumVet's funding round include Shopback-backer Aetius Capital and Purpose Venture Capital, founded by ex-banker and private investor Sharon Sim.

ZumVet provides teleconsultation, house consultation and e-prescription services. It has about 6,000 active users in Singapore, more than eight times the users six months ago.

Ms Lee founded the startup in 2019 with Grace Su, a doctor who consulted on Doctor Anywhere, after realising there was no quick and easy way to get medical advice for their pets.

They observed that pet owners tended to search online first or ask their friends for advice. A visit to a vet is time-consuming and expensive – a clinic consultation can cost S\$40 to S\$100 for cats and dogs.

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ZumVet charges S\$25 and above for a video call with a vet, and S\$150 and above for a house visit that can include routine check-ups, vaccinations and wound cleaning.

Over 30 vets are registered on the platform, with eight considered “very active” and taking over 10 cases per week, Ms Lee told *The Business Times*. ZumVet sees 70 to 100 weekly cases.

Pet telemedicine operates in a grey area. “There are no official guidelines out there, especially here in South-east Asia, regarding telemedicine. So we borrowed human telemedicine guidelines and applied it to vets,” said Ms Lee.

ZumVet does not do cross-border consultations, for instance. If there are cases from outside of Singapore, they match it with local vets or emphasise the fact that the session is only for advice, with no diagnosis involved, said Ms Lee.

The company has partnered Aon to provide vet consultation to policyholders, and plans to expand the range of benefits available. It is also working with clinics and e-commerce companies such as Vets for Life, My Animal Dispensary and Kohepets, so pet owners can buy medication and nutritional supplements.

ZumVet will launch its Hong Kong operations in June this year and is also eyeing the Malaysian market. Other key markets for expansion in the next three years include Thailand, Indonesia and Australia.

With data on pet health still largely fragmented, ZumVet is aiming to build a comprehensive repository where symptoms can be mapped more accurately to health conditions. Pet owners are already bringing external medical history into their system, said Ms Lee.

She acknowledged that the small pool of vets is one limiting factor to the startup’s expansion. The vets currently on the platform are mostly locums, similar to freelancers.

“The idea for them is that they do love the profession, and they still want to practise but they want to do it on their own terms. And so practising on a telemedicine platform gives them that balance and lifestyle that they would want,” said Ms Lee.

The startup will focus on integrating more automated features on its platform that suggest preventive measures and supplements for pets, as well as symptom-trackers for pets. That way, the care process and vet consultations will be more efficient, said Ms Lee.

Kwon Hyuk-tae, CEO at Pine Venture Partners and ZumVet’s new board member, said in a press statement: “The high growth and trajectory of pet ownership in Asia is clear, and Zumvet is positioned to provide much needed pet healthcare services, frictionlessly.”