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## Brighton manufacturer of blood pressure kiosks a high-tech success story

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*The Rochester Top 100, which annually recognizes the fastest-growing privately held companies in the nine-county region, is sponsored by the Rochester Business Alliance and KPMG.*

*Here is an interview with Fred Sarkis, president and CEO of Pharma-Smart International Inc.*

### **How did this company get going?**

We started as a distributor back in 1987 for another manufacturer, so I was distributing blood pressure kiosks in New York state and Canada prior to launching Pharma-Smart. We found that our customers wanted more technology, and our previous manufacturer really wasn't doing anything in response, so we developed Pharma-Smart with the idea of becoming experts in blood pressure management.

We want to discover hypertension and improve compliance, and those are all the things we can do with a unit in a pharmacy. With hypertension, there is no symptom; you don't feel bad when you have hypertension. They call it the silent killer because people don't know they have it, and the statistics are incredible. One in three adults has hypertension, and half of those don't know it.

### **Where do you market these blood pressure kiosks?**

We have three or four different sectors we go after. Number one is pharmacies, because there are 60,000 of them in the U.S. Then we have corporate work sites, where we'll go as part of an employee health promotion, and we set up a kiosk and provide a lot of health information. And we often do hypertension workshops where we actually have experts from our organization set up for the day and have people come through and teach them a hypertension program.

### **How does your product differ from the competition's?**

We came up with the concept of building a blood pressure machine that works with a Smartcard. So the pharmacy buys our machine, and then sells this card to a customer for like five bucks, and this chip in the card keeps their blood pressure history. It's confidential; it's in their pocket, not in the machine.

So here's my last readout. It tells me today's reading, then it tells me my last 10 readings, and it calculates my averages. And this model here is linked to the Internet, so the machine will fire your readings to a secure server site. Go online and log in the access code, and now I've got my blood pressure page, and it graphs it all out for you.

You can also e-mail this to your doctor. Let's say he changed my medication six months ago.

He can go and look at my blood pressure over the last six months. So it helps the patient and

caregiver monitor what's going on.

**And you offer the only product that uses a Smartcard like this?**

We're the only ones with the Smartcard. We've also got a patented cuff that's accurate on arm sizes, which is unique. A lot of times if you have a large arm, your reading will be slightly lower. And ours is the most accurate automated kiosk in the world. We're the only ones that I know of that have clinical validation published in a medical journal.

**The kiosk looks very user-friendly.**

We try to keep it really easy. We did a lot of market research and talked to the general public, and the ease of use was critical. Confidentiality and privacy was also critical. So we designed this to be confidential and easy to use.

**How much does one of your high-end machines cost?**

If you were to buy one, close to \$5,000. But probably 95 percent of the companies we deal with lease the equipment, and it's a full-service lease. We have technicians in the field that make sure the equipment is up and running all the time, we've got a quality assurance service program, and we've got an operating lease, so it's all-inclusive.

**Does Pharma-Smart do any business outside the country?**

Yeah, we're big in Canada, and in Europe.

We have a reseller program where we qualify potential distributors.

That has pretty much just launched, so it's brand-new.

**For a 21-person company, you've got a pretty high-tech Web site.**

That's what we were going for, and it's paid off. It's still not done yet — there are still a few parts under construction — but we've done a lot of work on it in the past six months.

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## Additional Facts

PHARMA-SMART INTERNATIONAL INC. No. 51

**Pharma-Smart International Inc.:** Designer, manufacturer and distributor of automated blood pressure kiosks.

**Year founded:** 2000.

**Location:** 3495 Winton Place, Brighton.

**Executives:** Fred Sarkis, president and CEO, of Brighton; Joseph Sarkis, senior vice president of business development, of Vancouver, British Columbia; Ashton Maaraba, vice president of global sales and marketing, of Pittsford.

**Employees:** 21.

**Web:** [www.pharma-smart.com](http://www.pharma-smart.com).