

Meet the bright mind behind medicine delivery app PharmaGo

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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Johannesburg-based Raees Carim was just 20 years old when he created PharmaGo, a homegrown mobile application that facilitates same-day and next-day deliveries of essential and over-the-counter medications to customers in need.



Raees Carim, PharmaGo

The idea sprung to mind when Carim's immune-compromised relative was unable to access essential medicine after traditional pharmacy closing hours. Two years since launch, PharmaGo's network now includes over 70 pharmacies nationwide, with fee-free deliveries available within a radius of 20-50km, depending on the location, in as little as one hour. A nationwide facility enables deliveries to sites outside of the network's reach, with those deliveries available in around a day.

Established as an aggregator rather than a medical supplier, PharmaGo passes on uploads of customers' prescriptions via the app, directly to a pharmacy panel, which is accessible only to the pharmacist fulfilling the prescription. This process ensures both information security and discretion. The direct-to-pharmacy prescription upload process is exclusive to PharmaGo and payments for the products are processed via credit or debit card, and direct medical aid submission.



Carim, who now holds a Bsc Degree in Construction and an Honours Degree in Quantity Surveying from Wits University, aims to expand PharmaGo's network of supplying pharmacies and is also looking to diversify the service beyond pharmaceuticals, with possible expansion into the wellness and beauty space.

For our #YouthMatters content focus this June, we spoke to the 22-year-old founder to hear more about his entrepreneurial journey so far and his passion for contributing to positive change.

■ ***Tell us about the inspiration behind PharmaGo, and what convinced you to turn your idea into reality?***

An immune-compromised relative would need medication at different times of the day and we found it difficult to get a responsive delivery service to get medication to us on short notice. I did some research and also realised that many people are experiencing the same issue.

This convinced me to take the step forward and come up with a solution that would make the delivery of medication more accessible. I also had the desire to do something beyond my studies that would impact people in a positive way.

■ ***Can you briefly take us through the process you followed launching PharmaGo – from concept to rollout 2 years later? Any unexpected pitfalls encountered and lessons learned along the way?***

I would say that I had a naive approach on PharmaGo in the concept stage. I had done extensive research into app development, pharmacies and pharmacy processes but I found that I did not envisage the challenge of bringing these two components together on a platform.

We encountered many challenges with user journey, regulations, and pharmacy requirements over the 2-year period. I would say that a lesson learned from this is that every problem needs to be approached with an open mind and the ability to push boundaries to come up with new solutions and be innovative.

It is also important to keep things simple and not get caught up with automating every process on your system.



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■ ***How did you go about getting buy-in from pharmacies?***

We were met with much resistance from every pharmacy that we contacted in the early days. I was turned away before I could pitch the PharmaGo solution to a pharmacy. I was able to give a demo presentation to a few pharmacies and got them to sign up and then leveraged these signups to get more pharmacies onboard.

■ ***To what or whom do you owe your entrepreneurial streak?***

I owe my entrepreneurial streak to the various teams and people that I was able to work with over the past two years. I also owe it to the few pharmacies that adopted the PharmaGo platform at an early stage. I definitely also had the sheer determination to push forward regardless of how inexperienced I was in this field.

■ ***How has PharmaGo grown since it launched, and how would you like to see the app evolve over the coming years?***

PharmaGo signups and interest has exceeded expectations since the launch in March. We expect to be on a significant growth path in the next year as we are constantly adding pharmacies and new categories, which consumers can shop for. We will also still run with a free nationwide delivery offering which has brought in many users.

We are evolving and will be partnering with different segments in the healthcare and tech industry in order to ensure that we have a wide and sustainable offering

■ ***How are you balancing a full-time career as a quantity surveyor and running a startup?***

PharmaGo started off as a side-hustle but is definitely something I am going to spend more time on. I am fortunate to have a good team who are able to assist with the daily running of the service. I am also looking forward to innovating the current offering even further and spending much of my time doing this.



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■ ***Anybody in particular you look up to as a business mentor?***

I do not have a particular business mentor or person that I look up to. I would say that everyone defines success differently and there are many conventional and unconventional routes to achievement and what may work for others may not work for you.

I prefer to draw lessons from the people around me or the people that I encounter on a daily basis. This allows me to appreciate different environments and adopt different ways of thinking to find the best solutions.

■ ***What advice do you have for other young budding entrepreneurs who believe they're sitting on a good idea?***

I don't consider myself to be in a position to be giving anyone advice as I am very young and still learning. However, I would say that it is up to young individuals to push boundaries and bring innovative solutions to our world. I think that a good approach to any idea for an entrepreneur would be to have a good balance between ambition and practicality.

I would also say that you have to be passionate about what you are doing and be persistent, no matter what. Never let success get to your head and never let failure get to your heart.

For more information on PharmaGo [click here](#). For additional #YouthMatters content, [click here](#).

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