



Dr. Rajen M. (PhD)

Age: 40
Married with one daughter

Qualifications:
Bachelor of Pharmacy (Hons),
Masters in Business Administration,
Doctorate in Holistic Medicine

Industry Activities:
Director, Malaysian Herbal Corporation
(under MIGHT)

Favourite food:
Japanese food, especially *sashimi* and eel

Supplements: Organic fruits and vegetables in a capsule, milk calcium tablets, fish oil

Hobby: Reading on health and management

Exercise: Walks the stairs instead of taking the elevator. Meditates for half an hour every day.

Dr. Rajen M took a different path in life and it made all the difference. The trained pharmacist created waves in the Malaysian health scene not by extolling virtues of modern drugs, but by ardently advocating alternative medicine. He was a pioneer when he started writing on alternative medicine in 1995 in a local newspaper. Since then, he has appeared on radio and television talk shows, and is a much sought after speaker on holistic health in public talks.

Rajen's knowledge on herbs and holistic health has been tapped by the Malaysian Government. He is a director of the Malaysian Herbal Corporation, a Government body that will spearhead the development of the herbal industry under a National Blue Print for the Herbal Industry to be implemented in 2004-2005. Rajen is also a member of the Malaysia Ministry of Health's Standing Committee for Traditional Medicine.

How did a pharmacist end up in alternative medicine? Back in the 1980s, Rajen used to scoff at herbs and alternative medicine as wishy-washy 'bomoh stuff'. As a trained pharmacist, he only believed in the power of modern drugs. He worked as a pharmacist in the Kuala Lumpur General Hospital and later enjoyed a promising career in marketing with several notable pharmaceutical companies. However, his belief system took a 360° turn ten years later, when he found out that drugs are not the only solution to health problems.

The paradigm shift is related to a nodular rash that appeared on Rajen's back every three weeks. What was irritating was that the nodules would bleed, causing embarrassing blood stains on his shirt. The rash would stay for about a week, disappear and then appear again

later. Being a pharmacist, Rajen medicated himself with creams, ointments and scrubs. Then he resorted to anti-histamines, antibiotics, anti-fungals and even steroids. He consulted several prominent doctors on his skin problem. Over a period of two years, he tried many medical options but nothing worked effectively. At one point, the skin on his back even peeled!

Desperation and the urging of his mother drove him to visit a homeopath. He was prescribed with pills that looked like 'sugar balls' made from some herbs. After a second dose of 'pills', the rash completely disappeared. Rajen was shocked that alternative medicine can work and that he himself did not know about how and why it worked. So he delved into the world of alternative medicine by reading and asking those in the

know. Herbs, Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, chiropractic and osteopathy became fascinating subjects to him.

Later, he left a lucrative career in the pharmaceutical industry to set up his own company, marketing herbs mostly from the ayurvedic heritage. "Ten years ago, a pharmacist going into herbs was unheard of," he notes. Over time, he researched Malaysian herbs and processed them into modern pharmaceutical dosage forms – creams, pills and capsules. He then signed up for a doctorate in Holistic Medicine.

His thesis was on eicosanoids, that is, biological modular research which looks at how molecules are affected by what we eat. His current areas of interest include detoxification and psychoneuroimmunology or mind-body medicine.

Rajen keeps himself in the forefront of developments in the herbal industry, especially research on tropical medicinal plants. He is one of the managing editors of *Journal of Tropical Medicinal Plants*, which publishes findings of eminent researchers. It contains scientific information on medicinal plants, utilisation, conservation, safety, efficacy and quality control.

In the academic field, Rajen contributed his knowledge as a course director in alternative medicine at the Pharmacy Department of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), and a guest lecturer on alternative medicine at the International Medical University (IMU). He is a member of the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society (MPS).

Currently, Rajen is expanding his business horizons. He is a director of Total Health Concept Sdn Bhd and the managing director of Alterni (M) Sdn Bhd. Both companies market herbal-based products as well as natural health products such as fish oil, minerals and organic multivitamins.