

MEDICINE ON THE MOVE

DOCTOR'S REVIEW

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JUNE 2010

A little power house

When it's open, the KIWI U-Powered looks like three mini solar panels. This little device, that closes to become the size of a mobile phone, is one of the most fun gadgets we've seen in a long time.

It's the brainchild of an Ottawa-based company, KIWI Choice; what makes this particular portable charger worth its \$49.99 price tag is its clever versatility: it can be charged from all power sources — a plug, a computer, a car and, of course, the sun. It has a power capacity of 2000 mAh and comes with 11 connectors.

It, in turn, charges cell phones, Blackberries, iPods, iPhones, digital cameras, Flip video cameras, eBooks, MP3 players, headphones and Nintendo DS. It's compatible with Nokia, LG, Samsung, Sony, Motorola and Palm.

You sit it in your office window, on your dashboard (it comes with a magnetic back to keep it in place), tie it to the top of your backpack or lay it out on the grass while you picnic.

It's definitely user-friendly. But is it eco-friendly? Consider that a solar panel needs about seven years of continuous use to generate the power it took to manufacture (granted, these are very tiny panels). And, of course, you have to factor in the cost of gas in transportation (it ships from Ottawa, so maybe not that far). That said, if you use it exclusively in solar mode you will definitely make a mini dent in your carbon footprint.

Plus, it's lightweight, fun and seriously portable (it comes with a travel pouch). It's well priced and it does actually work. kiwichoice.com. ■



Burn, baby, burn

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), more than half the world's population subscribes to a mobile phone service



IEA also says that electronic handheld devices account for around 15 percent of global household electricity use



According to Britain's Energy Savings Trust (EST), gadgets (handheld as well as large ones such as TVs and PCs) account for 25 percent of the electricity used by UK households. EST estimates this will rise to around 45 percent by 2020



IEA notes that the rise in energy use by entertainment and information technology is reversed in the rest of the house. In the kitchen, manufacturers have improved the efficiency of fridges, dishwashers and washing machines



In April 2007, Apple announced it had sold its one-hundred-millionth iPod