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## **New breast screening initiative to offer free mammograms**

*HPB-BCF collaboration to encourage lower-income women to screen early and regularly*

**Singapore, 17 March 2013:** According to the National Health Survey 2010, women from the lower-income households are less likely to go for cancer screening, with cost often cited as a deterrent.

2. To address this, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) and Breast Cancer Foundation (BCF) have today launched the BCF Encouragement for Active Mammograms (BEAM15) programme at an event held in celebration of International Women's Day 2013.

3. The BEAM15 programme will offer free mammograms to 6,000 eligible women aged 50 and above from the lower-income group. Half of these women will be first-time screeners, while the remaining 3,000 would have been screened before and are due for another mammogram.

4. In addition, HPB will expand the coverage of the mobile screening centre, the Mammobus, to more locations to encourage more women to come forward for breast screening by bringing it directly to the community. HPB will also provide 'mammoferry' services to transport women to nearby screening centres to increase the accessibility and convenience of cancer screening services.

5. This initiative is part of a three-year roadmap outlined by the Women's Health Advisory Committee (WHAC), chaired by Minister of State for Health and Manpower, Dr Amy Khor. The committee was formed in May last year to review the status of women's health in Singapore and identify the gaps and challenges. In particular, the Committee was tasked to develop strategies to increase women's cancer screening rates.

6. With the Committee's guidance, HPB also announced a move to encourage employers to do more to promote a healthy lifestyle among working women. As an extension to the existing annual \$15,000 Workplace Health Promotion Grant, HPB is offering another \$5,000 for employers to organise women-centric events such as parenting workshops and cancer screening programmes. Workplaces can start using this additional funding in July this year, and HPB aims to reach 90 workplaces and 10,000 women by 2015.

7. Dr Amy Khor, Minister of State for Health and Manpower, said, "The Singaporean woman today wears many hats – that of a mother, wife, daughter, caregiver, employee. Often, they look into everybody else's welfare, while their own health is left on the backburner. Today's event pays tribute to women, and reminds them to also place importance on their wellbeing to remain healthy and live a quality life. The enhancement to the Workplace Health Promotion Grant recognises the increasing role of women at the workplace and the need to promote a healthy lifestyle among working women so that they can better pursue their personal aspirations and cope with the demands of the family."

8. "BCF understands that a lack of resources prevents women in lower-income groups from prioritising their own health, until it is an emergency," said Noor Quek, President, Breast Cancer Foundation. "We want to ensure that no woman, in circumstances beyond her control, lacks the empowerment to take charge of her health with regard to breast cancer. BEAM15 gives her the opportunity to detect early, if she is afflicted with breast cancer, thus ensuring that she saves her life, for herself, and for those who love and depend on her."

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