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## **HEALTH PROMOTION BOARD SURVEY SHOWS SINGAPOREANS HAVE GREATER KNOWLEDGE OF HIV/AIDS PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

***HPB joins forces with local hair stylists for the first time to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS***

According to a survey by the Health Promotion Board (HPB), there is an increase in the knowledge of HIV/AIDS preventive measures, otherwise known as the ABCs – **A**bstinence from casual sex, **B**eing faithful to one uninfected sexual partner and using a **C**ondom correctly.

2 In 2010, about 67 per cent of respondents were aware of the ABCs, compared to only 37 per cent in 2007.

3 There is also greater acceptance for individuals with HIV/AIDS now than before. For example, while only about 22 per cent of participants said they were willing to share a meal with a person who has contracted HIV/AIDS in 2007, almost 41 per cent responded in the affirmative in 2010.

4 To promote understanding of the HIV/AIDS virus as well as lessen discrimination against people living with the condition, Dr Amy Khor, Minister of State for Health and Chairperson of the National HIV Policy Committee, is at Jurong Point today to commemorate World AIDS Day by putting a streak of red in her hair.

5 Marked on December 1, World AIDS Day aims to unite humanity in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. It is also a day to show support for people living with the condition, and remember those who have passed on before their time due to the infection.

6 “In Singapore, more than 400 people are diagnosed with HIV every year, with late testing and detection of the HIV infection a worrying trend. Education and outreach programmes will help to demystify and de-stigmatise the condition, and encourage at-risk individuals to take proper protective measures and come forward for regular HIV tests. Regular HIV testing will allow for early detection

and management of any HIV infection, delay the onset of AIDS and help ensure an active and productive life,” said Dr Khor.

7 One such outreach effort is the collaboration between HPB and L’Oréal Singapore. Not splitting hairs between beauty salons and government agencies, both are working together for the first time to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and fight the stigma associated with the condition.

8 In commemoration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hairdressers Against AIDS (HAA), a global initiative by L’Oréal to spread awareness about HIV/AIDS, professional hair stylists from more than 100 local hair salons pledge to initiate meaningful dialogues with their customers about HIV/AIDS – while the latter relax in salons with their hair down.

9 To equip these stylists with the necessary information that they can share with their customers, HPB conducted a training programme for HAA master trainers, who went on to train other HAA participants to help them understand issues about HIV/AIDS in Singapore’s context.

10 Divided into two modules, the classes provided information on the transmission, prevention and management of HIV/AIDS; the stigma associated with the condition as well as the need to support People Living with HIV. In addition, HPB also shared tips on how to approach and engage customers in fruitful discussions on HIV/AIDS.

11 “HPB’s HIV/AIDS educational messages are usually broadcast to the general public. Our challenge in educating Singaporeans about HIV/AIDS is to make information personal, so that it can be more impactful. This is why HPB is working with hair stylists, many of whom have developed personal and longstanding relationships with their customers.

12 “The time that customers spend in hair salons to get their hair done also creates opportunities for hair stylists to share their knowledge of HIV/AIDS preventive measures, or the ABCs. By 2012, we aim to increase awareness of the ABCs among Singaporeans, from the current 67 per cent to 80 per cent,” said Mr Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive Officer, HPB.

13 Mr Ang added that such a whole-person approach in HPB’s HIV/AIDS outreach activities, whereby messages are tailored to take advantage of people’s different frames of mind in workplaces and various social settings, ensures that educational messages achieve maximum impact.

14 “Together, we aim to debunk misconceptions of HIV/AIDS, lessen stigmatisation and improve HIV/AIDS prevention and management in Singapore,” he said.

15            During the next two weeks, the HAA project aims to reach out to 30,000 Singaporeans, who will be encouraged to put a streak of red in their hair to show support for World AIDS Day.

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