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HPB LAUNCHES ENHANCED 3-in-1 SCREENING TO INCLUDE FALLS PREVENTION SCREENING AND INTERVENTION FOR SENIORS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

To reduce the number of falls and fall-related injuries among the elderly, the Health Promotion Board is adding a falls prevention component to its existing 3-in-1 community one-stop screening and on-site follow-up programme.

Singapore, 9 September 2012: Research suggests that falls account for about 85 per cent of all injuries in elderly persons, and about three quarters of these falls occur at home.

2. Falls by elderly persons are often due to ‘environmental’ causes such as slippery floors, wires across floors, inappropriate footwear or poor lighting. These are compounded by worsening eyesight, balance problems, weakening muscles and bones, and other health problems that may result in giddiness or impaired mobility.

3. Falls by the elderly can lead to hospitalisation, fractures and dislocations, long- or short-term dependency, functional limitations, a decreased quality of life, permanent disability or even death.

4. To reduce the number of falls and fall-related injuries among the elderly, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) has added a falls prevention component to its existing 3-in-1 community one-stop screening and on-site follow-up programme.

5. This enhanced community one-stop screening programme will first be implemented jointly with Bedok Constituency and People’s Association. This is in keeping with the vision of Grassroots Adviser Mr Lim Swee Say and Bedok Grassroots Organisations, of Bedok as a place where residents actively care for one another, with private individuals and businesses in the area joining HPB, grassroots organisations, VWOs and healthcare

professionals to do their part to provide residents with a comprehensive one-stop screening and on-site follow-up.

6. The programme comprises systematic screening followed by intervention strategies:

- Screening to assess an elderly person's risk of falling
- Screening for osteoporosis together with educational talks and workshops on prevention and management of osteoporosis
- Screening for changes in vision followed by prescription for spectacles (if necessary) by optometrists
- On-site pharmacists to review elderly persons on multiple medications as this may be a cause of giddiness or other issues, resulting in falls
- Completion of a home safety checklist by Senior Health Ambassadors followed by home assessments where necessary by occupational therapists, to detect possible fall hazards and recommend simple changes to the home environment
- Falls prevention talks and workshops for both the elderly and their caregivers
- Healthy lifestyle activities tailored for the elderly such as the Strength Training Exercise Programme (STEP) developed by HPB

7. Said Mr Lim: "In Singapore, more than 20 per cent of patients who suffer a hip fracture die within a year of the incident. This goes to show that falls and fall-related injuries are serious public health challenges that need urgent attention in a rapidly ageing country like ours. Not only do falls result in fractures, they are also the cause of major injuries such as head trauma, disabilities and may even end in death. The elderly are particularly at risk of falls because of age-related functional decline. To help Bedok's senior citizens boost their health as well as learn more about fall prevention techniques or detecting possible fall hazards within the home, HPB is systematically rolling out an enhanced version of its community one-stop screening and on-site follow-up programme at Bedok's four RC Zones to include a fall prevention component. A multi-party initiative involving HPB, grassroots organisations, VWOs, general practitioners, dentists, pharmacists and other allied health professionals such as optometrists and occupational therapists, this integrated screening project is part of a holistic lifestyle intervention plan for Bedok residents, which also includes a Health Corner and Healthier Smoke-free Hawker Programme."

8. HPB's Health Ambassadors will be present at the Health Corner to conduct BMI and blood pressure checks to ensure that residents of all ages, and not just the elderly, have convenient access to such tests which are recommended for people aged 18 and above.

9. These Health Ambassadors will also help to raise residents' health literacy through interactive games, health promoting activities as well as sharing health information and healthy lifestyle tips. In addition, they are on hand to help residents sign up for the Community Health Assistance Scheme (CHAS), where appropriate.

10. Said Mr Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive Officer, HPB: "About 2,200 seniors aged 50 years and above were hospitalised for hip fracture in 2010, and the length of hospital stay for those with hip fractures is up to two weeks. This number of seniors is expected to rise to 6,000 by 2030, which means there is a high chance Singaporeans will have a personal encounter with this unfortunate experience, either themselves or through their family and loved ones. Preventing falls is an important step we can all take to protect our elderly against any unnecessary fractures and hospitalisation. To do so, there are important adjustments we can make, such as incorporating strength training in the physical activity routine for seniors and training our Senior Health Ambassadors to help families complete a home safety checklist. Adding a falls prevention component to our existing integrated screening programme is also an important adjustment HPB has made. With this enhanced 3-in-1 screening programme, HPB now offers seniors affordable, one-stop access to an even more comprehensive suite of preventive screening services."

11. HPB's enhanced 3-in-1 community one-stop screening and on-site follow-up programme will screen 400 Bedok residents at its launch today. By 2015, HPB aims to roll out this screening programme to 87 constituencies across Singapore.

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