

SELF-EMPLOYED TAXI DRIVERS TO BENEFIT FROM WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION INITIATIVES

HPB and NTA sign MOU to increase health literacy and empower taxi drivers to improve their health and wellbeing

Singapore, 18 November 2012: The Health Promotion Board (HPB) and National Taxi Association (NTA) have joined forces for the first time to bring innovative workplace health initiatives to more than thirteen thousand taxi drivers across the nation.

2. Considered self-employed, Singapore's taxi drivers would ordinarily not be able to reap the benefits of HPB's Workplace Health Promotion programme. However, with the signing of this ground-breaking Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) they will now be able to benefit from workplace health initiatives.

3. Amy Khor, Minister of State for Health and Manpower, said "Only through the concerted and collaborative efforts of the government, unions and employers can we look forward to a nation of healthy workers. I welcome the signing of this MOU as the first step in ensuring that this sector of Singapore's self-employed workforce who would not normally have access to HPB's Workplace Health Programmes will now be able to access and benefit from workplace health initiatives such as regular health screening and follow-up with GPs, workshops on tips to improve their health, dedicated health corners and the distribution of stretch bands and user-friendly exercise guides. They will also be provided with specially developed notebooks which will contain simple health tips designed for their use. This should help to improve the health of our taxi drivers who

are at risk of suffering from various chronic diseases due to long hours spent at the wheel with little time for exercise and often irregular meals.”

4. To further enhance health literacy, a specially customised workshop on Workplace Health Promotion will be regularly run by HPB to sensitise and build the capability of taxi leaders across all six of Singapore’s taxi operators¹. In addition, staff of the National Taxi Association will also be trained in a separate series of workshops aimed at equipping managers with the necessary skill set to advise and motivate the taxi drivers to take charge of their health.

5. Said Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive Officer, HPB, “Taxi drivers typically spend long hours at one stretch behind the wheel. They have little time for health screening or to exercise regularly and their meals are often taken on the go. They are at higher risk of suffering from high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, kidney problems as well as backaches and stiff necks. Their health needs are therefore quite unique and warrant a bespoke approach to Workplace Health Promotion. Joining forces with the National Taxi Association, we have been able to prototype a series of initiatives aimed at taxi drivers while allowing for easy and convenient access. For example, with the establishment of health corners at Taxi Servicing centres, the drivers will be able to improve their health literacy and screen for their Body Mass Index (BMI) and blood pressure while waiting for the vehicles to be serviced. The development of a user-friendly exercise guide and distribution of stretch bands will allow them to stay fit in between fares.”

6. Said Wee Boon Kim, President, NTA, “NTA is delighted to be able to gain support from HPB in better promoting health and wellness to taxi drivers. Taxi drivers are self-employed and often work long hours on the road. It is thus important that our taxi drivers are educated on the importance of health and wellness, and be able to take responsibility of their well-being. With HPB’s support and grant on health check, health promotion corners and well-being activities, it will make it easier for our members to stay fit and continue to drive safely, and help us move towards our aim of ‘*Age Well, Drive Healthily*’ for all our members.”

¹ Comfort Taxi, CityCab, Premier Taxi, SmartCab, SMRT and Transcab.

7. With an average of 200 taxis serviced every day at each of the six service locations, HPB expects its Workplace Health Initiatives to reach some 1200 taxi drivers every day.

8. To assess the effectiveness of the initiatives and solicit feedback with a view to improving them, some 2000 taxi drivers will be surveyed on a yearly basis by the HPB.

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Annex 1 Factsheet on HPB-NTA MOU and Initiatives

Issued by Health Promotion Board

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The MOU will comprise three broad strategies to help boost health literacy and empower taxi drivers with health programmes that help improve their health status:

1. Awareness Building

As part of the partnership with Health Promotion Board (HPB), the National Taxi Association (NTA) has planned a health and wellness roadshow on 17 & 18 November 2012 for taxi drivers to discover various ways to inculcate healthy living into their daily lifestyles.

In addition to the HPB exhibits on display, there will be onsite health screenings for taxi drivers to take their BMI, Blood Pressure Measurement, Full Cholesterol Test and Full Blood Glucose Test. They will also enjoy a complimentary one-time follow-up with GPs from clinics of the appointed medical service providers.

To reinforce the health messages, mini notebooks with useful health tips will be distributed at the event. Stretch bands (with exercise tips) will also be issued to taxi drivers, to encourage them to keep physically active by doing simple stretching exercises during their breaks.

2. Knowledge Building

NTA will continue to impart health knowledge to its members through its quarterly mailers, health flyers and posters at the Singapore Taxi Academy.

Inline with outreach efforts, HPB and NTA will work closely to set up Health Corners at Taxi Servicing Centres, enabling taxi drivers to take their BMI readings and Blood Pressure on a regular basis, when they send their hired vehicles for routine servicing. The Health Corner will be decked with HPB posters and collaterals which will provide relevant information on health topics such as smoking, nutrition, obesity etc.

To encourage taxi drivers to get active, members of NTA will also get access to subsidised rates for rental of sports facilities such as badminton courts and bowling lanes.

3. Capability Building

To build the overall capacity of its health advocates, HPB will work closely with NTA to develop Workplace Health Promotion workshops for NTA staff, providing guidance in identifying and formulating relevant health programmes, suitable for its membership of taxi drivers.

HPB will also run customised Workplace Health Promotion workshops for taxi leaders, equipping them with practical health training which they can then impart to their fellow colleagues.

To stay relevant to the health needs of its members, pre- and post mass health surveys will also be carried out on a yearly basis to garner feedback and comments from a target segment of about 2,000 taxi drivers.