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**NEW RESOURCE KIT HELPS HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS TURN ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTION WITH PATIENTS INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENCOURAGING HEALTHY BEHAVIOUR CHANGE**

*With chronic diseases and unhealthy lifestyle behaviours on the rise, the Health Promotion Board is launching a point-of-care resource kit to equip healthcare professionals with the tools to boost patients' health literacy, help them set health goals and modify their lifestyles.*

**Singapore, 1 September 2012:** According to the National Health Survey 2010, two in five Singaporeans aged 20 years and above were suffering from at least one chronic ailment.

2. The prevalence of chronic diseases and unhealthy lifestyle behaviours – which comprise the largest group of preventable risk factors for disease in Singapore – had been rising in recent years.

3. In 2004, the NHS indicated that 9 per cent of adults between 18 and 69 are diabetic, 6.9 per cent are obese and 12.6 per cent smoked daily. In 2010, these figures had jumped to 11.3 per cent, 10.8 per cent and 14.3 per cent respectively.

4. To guide and support healthcare professionals in counselling patients whose lifestyle behaviours put them at risk of developing or mismanaging chronic conditions, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) is launching the Health Choices Toolkit, a set of point-of-care resources to enable healthcare professionals to anticipate patients' preventive needs, help them set health goals and modify their lifestyles.

5. Based on international best practices, the Health Choices Toolkit was developed by HPB in partnership with local healthcare professionals from disciplines such as General

Practice, Dentistry, Nursing, Pharmacy, Optometry, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Dietetics, Psychology, Sports Medicine and Public Health.

6. The aim is to provide a shared and sustained response to the rising prevalence of chronic diseases, among other healthcare professionals such as pharmacists and nurses who are well-positioned to give opportunistic health advice.

7. Focusing on four main lifestyle risk factors (smoking, obesity, stress and unsafe sexual practices), the Health Choices Toolkit consists of:

- A practice manual for healthcare professionals
- A tabletop flip chart for use during patient consultation, which includes a patient page for ease of reference to the patient and assessment cards for the four risk factors
- A poster and information brochures to prompt patients to start or continue conversations with their healthcare professionals about their lifestyle habits
- A dedicated webpage for viewing case videos and downloading resources
- The Physical Activity Advice Tool (PAAT), developed by HPB to help physicians assess their patients quickly, give brief advice and provide tailored counselling as well as information about the types of physical activity that best suit them

8. The Health Choices Toolkit is designed in line with the '3A's brief approach (Ask, Advise and Action) as well as the '5A's intensive approach (Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist and Arrange), and provides clear steps for healthcare professionals to conduct guided dialogue with their patients about making lifestyle changes.

9. Said Mr Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive Officer, HPB: "Studies show that people who are unwell are more likely to make healthy lifestyle changes recommended by their doctors. The Health Choices Toolkit was developed as a convenient and user-friendly tool in Singapore's four languages to help healthcare professionals proactively give tailored evidence-based health advice to patients who are at risk of developing or mismanaging chronic conditions. It is part of HPB's strategy to leverage the quality one-to-one interaction between healthcare professionals and patients, and turn it into an opportunity to share health knowledge and get Singaporeans thinking about behaviour changes to improve their health – especially those who are not likely to seek out health advice on their own. The Toolkit also takes into consideration the fact that busy healthcare professionals have limited capacity and time, and is therefore designed to enable them to assess patients quickly and give brief but effective advice."

10. Such a personal and targeted approach is the first step in getting more Singaporeans to start a dialogue with their healthcare providers. At the same time, healthcare providers are encouraged to carry out Motivational Interviewing (a patient-centric counselling style used to elicit behaviour change) as well as boost Health Literacy by helping patients understand and access the health information and services needed to make healthier choices.

11. Said Dr Theresa Yap, Yang and Yap Clinic and Surgery: “The Health Choices Toolkit is a very useful tool for doctors like me working in Primary Care. I often find patients at high risk for certain conditions like high blood pressure, or have a strong family history of diabetes. Due to the nature of my work as well as the trust and bond I’ve established with my patients, I am in a position to offer opportunistic lifestyle advice that is likely to be accepted and understood by my patients.”

12. As part of the launch of the Health Choices Toolkit as a set of effective point-of-care resources, HPB is organising a national conference today to share best practices with Family Physicians (FPs), dentists, pharmacists, allied health professionals and other valued healthcare professionals. *(Please refer to ANNEX A for more details about the speakers)*

13. Said one speaker, Dr Darren DeWalt, Associate Professor, Division of General Internal Medicine and Clinical Epidemiology, University of North Carolina, USA: “When I was a medical student, I became very interested in why some groups of people were usually more sick than others, and it wasn’t just about access to healthcare; it’s also about how well people understand doctors’ instructions and other health information, otherwise known as health literacy. With HPB proactively encouraging clinicians and healthcare organisations to use optimal health literacy principles, I believe health outcomes in Singapore will improve, with patients and clinicians experiencing greater satisfaction.”

14. In addition, HPB will be conducting capacity-building courses over the next three months for GPs, pharmacists, allied health professionals, dentists, oral health therapists and other interested healthcare partners.

15. By the end of September, about 5,500 healthcare professionals across Singapore – including privately-registered FPs, dentists, Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, optometrists as well as those practising in polyclinics and restructured hospitals – will receive a copy of the Health Choices Toolkit. A soft copy is also available on HPB’s website.

16. And by October, HPB would have signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the Singapore Physiotherapy Association, Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore, and Singapore Association of Occupational Therapists. The aim is to strengthen the Allied Health and Pharmacists Network within the local health ecosystem by increasing the number of touch points offering effective health advice as well as the number of allied health professionals and pharmacists actively helping patients lead a healthier lifestyle.

17. Revolving around a shared vision of supporting local healthcare professionals in providing holistic care management to prevent as well as delay the progression of diseases, the two-year MoUs will result in:

- The development of a health promoting curriculum for allied health professionals
- Further engagement of these allied health professionals in providing effective health advice and intervention
- Their mobilisation during HPB's outreach efforts to raise health literacy and help Singapore residents adopt healthy lifestyles

**Issued by Health Promotion Board**

## Speakers' Biographies

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### **Ms Fiona McMaster, MA, MPH**

*Project Director 'Brief Motivational Interviewing for Body Mass Index', University of Michigan, United States*

Ms McMaster is a Motivational Interviewing (MI) trainer and researcher. She runs a US-wide clinical trial of MI in paediatric practice partnering with the American Academy of Pediatrics. Ms McMaster just completed a systematic review of MI for the prevention and management of chronic disease.

### **Dr. Darren A. DeWalt, MD, MPH**

*Associate Professor, Division of General Internal Medicine and Clinical Epidemiology, University of North Carolina, United States*

Dr. DeWalt actively researches self-management interventions for patients with low-literacy and focuses on chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart failure, COPD, and asthma. His focus area is patient-physician communication and health system design to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable populations. Dr. DeWalt is the lead author of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit in the United States.