



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

**WELCOME REMARKS
BY MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MR GAN KIM YONG
AT THE 11TH WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY, 7 JUNE 2014**

Mr Tee Tua Ba, Chairman of Singapore Red Cross

A/Prof John Lim, CEO, Health Sciences Authority

Mr Benjamin William, Secretary General, Singapore Red Cross

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to join you at the celebration of the 11th World Blood Donor Day. Coming here is like coming home. I'll explain why. I have known Mr Tee Tua Ba for some 20 to 25 years, since I was a young officer in the Ministry of Home Affairs. Mr Tee is a man of steel. Also, I was a member of the Red Cross Society, some 40 years ago. But today, I am not the GOH. All of you here today, you are the GOH.

2 Today is a special day when we honour the heroes, who have selflessly given their time and blood to save lives. I am very proud to be standing among you today. Thanks to your life-saving contributions, nearly 32,000 patients in Singapore were able to receive blood transfusions last year. It is indeed heartening to know that the number of people who made more than 125 donations each – we call them the champion blood donors – has been growing year after year. To our champion blood donors, you have our deepest appreciation.

3 Thank you also to those who labour tirelessly behind the scenes, in particular, the committed organisers who help with mobile blood drives, and the enthusiastic volunteers who constantly rally for blood donations. Together, you have truly given patients in Singapore a precious lifeline.

4 That we have so many champion blood donors and committed individuals in our midst is indeed remarkable. They give blood without expecting any incentive or reward. Our principle of voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation is an important pillar of our National Blood Programme. This has helped ensure that patients in Singapore have access to a safe and sustainable blood supply.



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Challenges to the National Blood Programme

5 Our national blood programme will need more such champion donors, going forward. We face increasing blood demand as a result of a growing and ageing population. By 2030, the number of elderly citizens in Singapore will triple to 900,000.

6 Blood demand will continue to increase, with usage projected to rise between 3 and 5 percent annually over the next two decades in Singapore. Therefore, to meet the increased demand, we not only have to grow the donor pool more rapidly, but our donation capacity will also have to be expanded by almost two-fold by 2030.

Expanding Blood Donation Capacity

7 To achieve this, I am glad to announce that in addition to the existing blood donation centres at Outram, Dhoby Ghaut and Woodlands, two more satellite blood donation centres will be set up by 2018, bringing the total number of blood donation centres to five. These new satellite centres will be located at areas with high population density. HSA is looking into the feasibility of several sites and will announce this in due course. From past surveys and interactions with donors, we understand that donors greatly value convenience and accessibility. By bringing these satellite centres nearer to the community, to where donors live, work and play, we hope to make donating blood even more convenient, so that we can reach out to more potential donors.

8 The success of our two existing satellite blood donation centres has given us the confidence that this is the right way moving forward. Last year, Bloodbank@DhobyGhaut and Bloodbank@Woodlands contributed about 18% and 13% of total blood donations, respectively. In particular, I am pleased to see the success of the Bloodbank@DhobyGhaut, which was officially opened in 2012. Despite being the newest, this centrally-situated satellite centre already sees healthy crowds of over 1,600 donors every month, with youths making up more than 35 per cent of its donors. Its location has also enabled us to reach out to the nearby educational institutions, including the Singapore Management University, the Management Development Institute of Singapore, and LASALLE College of the Arts.

Donor Engagement

9 To build up a healthy and constant stream of new donors and to encourage healthy donors of various age groups to donate more regularly, the Singapore Red Cross will step



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up efforts to build community partnerships. It will intensify engagements with both public and private organisations, to create greater awareness of the critical role that the National Blood Programme plays in saving lives. This means convincing more corporate partners to make blood donation an integral part of their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.

10 The Singapore Red Cross will also develop targeted campaigns so that the importance of regular blood donation will be entrenched in people's minds.

11 To cultivate our youths to start donating from a young age, the Singapore Red Cross will focus on campus activation campaigns and the use of social media, such as Facebook and mobile applications, to build a strong core of regular youth donors. We hope they would also get their friends to be involved in the National Blood Programme through positive peer influence. Through these activities, we aim to grow the current pool of youth donors from 31 to 35 percent.

Conclusion

12 This two-pronged strategy of capacity expansion and donor engagement will ensure that our blood demand will continue to be met in the years ahead. This is possible with the partnership between the Singapore Red Cross and the Health Sciences Authority, where both organisations have pooled together their capabilities and worked seamlessly to meet Singapore's blood demand. Moving ahead, they will continue to tap on their respective strengths to provide a safe and sustainable blood supply to meet the needs of patients in Singapore.

13 I wish to express my appreciation to the Singapore Red Cross and the Health Sciences Authority for organising yet another successful World Blood Donor Day.

14 I wish all the champion blood donors and their families a day of celebration. May you continue to inspire others to be as selfless and generous as you have been.

Thank you.



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