



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

**SPEECH BY MR GAN KIM YONG, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AT
THE 12TH WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY, 6 JUNE 2015,
AT SINGAPORE DISCOVERY CENTRE**

Mr Tee Tua Ba, Chairman, Singapore Red Cross
Dr Mimi Choong, CEO, Health Sciences Authority
Mr Benjamin William, Secretary General, Singapore Red Cross
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning to all of you. It gives me great pleasure to join you at the celebration of World Blood Donor Day. This is the twelfth year we are marking this event in Singapore. The many inspiring stories of our donors and their commitment have motivated others around them to follow their example and become donors as well. Let me share with you the story of a blood recipient turned donor, Mr Koh Wee Jin. He received blood when he was eight years old due to a critical illness. That experience ingrained in him the importance of blood donation, and inspired him to make his first donation when he was 21 years old. Mr Koh is now 35 years old and a father of one. He has donated blood 21 times.

2 Mrs Angelia Al Johary, our only female Medal for Life recipient this year, is another inspiring story. She has donated blood an impressive 150 times, and is only the second woman in Singapore to receive the Medal for Life honour. Mrs Al Johary is not only a dedicated donor; she is a strong advocate of the National Blood Programme and volunteers for blood donor recruitment activities regularly, doing her part to promote the importance of blood donation.

3 I am sure every blood donor here today has an inspiring story to tell. Why did you start donating blood? Who inspired you to make the first donation? What kept you going? We have come together to celebrate all of your stories today. We thank you for your selfless contributions, and your gift of life to patients in need.

4 Today, we would like to recognise the contributions of 1554 champion donors. I am heartened by how this number has grown over the years. It is remarkable that these champion donors not only came forward to give blood, they have continued to do so year after year, without expecting any incentive or reward. To be recognised as a Champion of Champions donor, you need to donate blood at least four times a year for more than 35 years! Your unwavering altruism, and strong commitment, has helped ensure that patients in Singapore continue to have access to a safe and sustainable blood supply.

5 We would also like to thank the 262 blood mobile organisers who have laboured tirelessly behind the scenes last year to support the National Blood Programme. By working closely with the Singapore Red Cross to organise mobile blood drives, the blood mobile



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organisers have made blood donation more convenient and accessible. Their enthusiasm in rallying their colleagues, their organisations and their communities for blood donations has encouraged new donors to come forward to make their first donation. Even as more people now donate at our fixed blood donation sites, blood mobiles will continue to play an important and strategic role. Our statistics show that 63% of first time donors make their first donation at a mobile blood drive.

Getting More People Involved

6 While we recognise and celebrate these achievements, we are also aware that the overall number of blood donors must continue to grow to meet our future blood needs. In the last three years, we have about 70,000 blood donors each year. The Ministry of Health is improving access to healthcare, by adding two new general hospitals and four new community hospitals by 2020. This means that demand for blood will continue to rise and we need more donors to come forward to ensure a sustainable supply.

7 The Singapore Red Cross Youth are already leading by example. Fifty torchbearers ran a relay to promote blood donation among youths on 11 April 2015. The event aimed to encourage all pre-tertiary and tertiary institutions to organise 50 blood mobiles to collect 5,000 units of blood this year. We hope to see more groups taking the initiative to promote the cause of blood donation.

8 The Singapore Red Cross is also constantly looking for new ways to connect with donors. The Red Cross Connection app, which was launched in 2013, has successfully reached more than 15,000 people. They have used the application to make appointments and share their donation experience. In a few months' time, new functions will be added to the app to track our progress against the annual blood collection target. We hope that this will heighten social responsibility and social awareness and invoke a sense of urgency among the public. Donors will be able to monitor the blood supply situation actively, and take the necessary action to donate blood or encourage friends to donate when needed.

Expansion of Bloodbank@Dhoby Ghaut

9 I am also delighted to share with you that we will be expanding the current premises of the Bloodbank@Dhoby Ghaut. This bloodbank has become very popular with donors, especially youths and working adults. The average daily donations have grown by 55% from 2012 to 2014. To help improve donor experience and shorten waiting times during peak periods, HSA plans to add an additional interview room to the existing two, and three extra beds will be added to the existing ten by the end of this year. We hope that this expansion would allow us to increase blood collection and give our donors a better experience.

Conclusion

10 While the Singapore Red Cross and the Health Sciences Authority are the drivers of the National Blood Programme, the programme has come so far because of the strong and dedicated support of all blood donors and blood mobile organisers. By working together and pooling resources and capabilities, we have made a safe and sustainable blood supply possible for all patients in Singapore. On behalf of these patients, I would like to thank all



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blood donors and blood mobile organisers once again for this wonderful gift of life. And I hope all of you will continue to inspire others to come forward and do the same.

Thank you.



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