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HSA opens 2nd satellite blood donation centre at Dhoby Ghaut

This new satellite site is the first to be set up in the city centre and is part of a broader strategy to increase the number of youth donors

Singapore's second fixed satellite blood donation centre was officially opened at Dhoby Ghaut today by the Minister for Health, Mr Gan Kim Yong. Located within the bustling Orchard Road shopping belt and in close proximity to the arts, cultural and heritage district of Bras Basah and Bugis, the new Bloodbank@Dhoby Ghaut occupies five units at Dhoby Xchange at the Dhoby Ghaut MRT station.

2 Managed by the Health Sciences Authority (HSA), the national blood service, in partnership with the Singapore Red Cross (SRC), the national blood donor recruiter, the new centre is targeted at those working in the nearby offices, shoppers as well as students from the surrounding educational institutions. The new satellite site will be a key part of the effort by SRC and HSA to increase the number of youth donors (aged 16 to 25 years) to 35% of total blood donors by 2014.

3 The newly opened centre is part of a concerted effort in HSA's broader strategy to make blood donation more convenient and community-based through the opening of more satellite centres around other parts of Singapore. These fixed donation centres have been planned to be easily accessible for individuals to make regular blood donations. The design and décor, operating hours, as well as services offered, are tailored to suit the lifestyles of the donors who are expected to frequent them.

4 "To ensure an adequate supply of blood to meet our needs, we need to encourage more people to donate blood and do so more regularly. Fixed satellite blood donation centres like this one in Dhoby Ghaut will provide greater convenience to blood donors. Located at the heart of Orchard Road - where many people work, study and play - the Bloodbank@Dhoby Ghaut serves as an excellent base where more people, young and old, can get into the positive habit of donating blood regularly," said Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Health.

Putting Donors First

5 Given its central location in the heart of the city and being serviced by three MRT lines, the Bloodbank@Dhoby Ghaut was envisioned to offer a more brisk, vibrant and fun environment that reflects the buzz of activity in its location. Design thinking process was similarly applied to the satellite centre with the use of bold colours and stripes.

6 A poll was conducted earlier in the year to help HSA plan for the centre's operations so that it can serve its donors better. In response to the findings, the new blood donation centre will offer later closing hours on weekdays from 12pm to 8pm on Mondays to Wednesdays and from Fridays to Sundays. It will be closed on Thursdays and Public Holidays. These operating hours also complement those at the Bloodbank@HSA and Bloodbank@Woodlands, offering donors a wider choice of options in terms of their preferred donation timings.

7 In response to donor feedback, the new centre offers free wireless access and phone charging services. The queue management system has also been enhanced so that donors can receive SMS alerts when it comes to their turn to make their donations.

8 In addition, a new electronic form-filling system for donors will be piloted at the new centre from mid October. It will be an interactive system that helps donors navigate the donor health assessment questionnaire in a more informed manner.

Replicating a Success Story

9 "Our experience at the Bloodbank@Woodlands has shown that having convenient and fixed blood donation locations are major factors that encourage people to donate blood regularly. Close to 80% of the donors we serve live in the vicinity of Woodlands and the nearby residential estates. Almost 90% of the donors at Bloodbank@Woodlands are repeat donors, most of whom have visited the centre at least twice to donate blood. We hope that with the setting up of another satellite centre at an accessible location such as Dhoby Xchange, we will create another avenue for a pool of committed donors to regularly support our life-saving cause," said Assoc Prof John Lim, CEO of HSA.

10 The Bloodbank@Woodlands also attracted close to 2,000 first-time donors, and saw some 1,200 donors who did not donate blood for more than 2 years to come forward to make donations again. Added Assoc Prof Lim, "Today, only about 1.8% of the residential population in Singapore are regular blood donors. We hope that by making blood donation a more convenient and visible activity within the community at our satellite sites, we can generate more public interest in blood donation and also create more gathering points that will appeal to people from all walks of life to come together to do something meaningful."

11. To better serve our blood donors, the Bloodbank@Woodlands has further embarked on a pilot trial to extend operating hours during the weekends. The 3-month pilot trial is ongoing and is part of our continuing efforts to explore ways to match donors' preferences.

Saving Lives as a Community

12 The opening of the Bloodbank@Dhoby Ghaut also paves the way further in encouraging blood donation as a part of the community's lifestyle. HSA will work closely with the SRC, to implement more community-based donor engagement programmes. These programmes will be tailored towards the population groups frequenting the areas in the vicinity. Activities will be organised to generate greater publicity to encourage more non-donors to come forward.

13 One key strategy is to use the new centre to intensify our youth outreach. SRC and HSA aim to increase the number of youth donors (aged 16 to 25 years) to 35% of total blood donors by 2014. Currently, youth donors make up about 30% of the donor population. The SRC is planning a donor recruitment campaign in 2013 to actively recruit younger blood donors to come forward to give the gift of life through blood donation. With the new satellite centre being close to several educational institutions, SRC plans to collaborate with youth groups in these schools such as Red Cross Youth and Chapters, to organise road shows and outreach to attract more youth donors and raise the awareness of blood donation.

14 SRC is also working with art schools in the vicinity to develop art pieces for the 'Live Wall', a unique feature of Bloodbank@Dhoby Ghaut. The 'Live Wall' not only provides the youth a physical space to display their creativity, it also helps to accentuate the youthful and vibrant ambience of the blood bank. To cater to the younger profile of donors in the area, youth volunteers will also help at the Volunteer Meet-and-Greet Service of the blood bank.

15 "We wish to encourage more people to start donating blood when they are young. Not only are they fit and healthy, it also helps to inculcate a meaningful habit for a lifetime. To connect with the youth, we are already on several social media platforms such as Facebook and mobile applications. We are encouraged to see how our youth blood donors use these platforms to share their donation experiences and to encourage other youth to donate as well. We intend to launch new youth-centric recruitment programmes in 2013 to grow our base of youth donors. Aside from this, we will continue organising public blood drives, road-shows and talks in schools and other institutions to reach out to the members of the public. In particular, we hope to spread the message of the importance of blood donations in saving lives, as well as to dispel myths and fears that people who have never donated blood before may have," said Mr Benjamin William, Secretary General of the Singapore Red Cross.

Looking Ahead

16 More than 100,000 units of blood are needed to meet the transfusion needs of patients every year, equivalent to more than 350 units of blood a day. Blood goes to those having medical emergencies such as accident survivors; individuals undergoing major surgeries such as organ transplants; patients with cancers and blood disorders and even newborns with medical conditions.

17 While Singapore's national blood needs are currently met, the national blood requirement is expected to increase by 3% annually. In the past 10 years, blood collections have increased from 60,000 units in 2001 to more than 100,000 units in 2011. In light of this, HSA is working towards the aim of establishing about five satellite centres strategically located in each major geographic hub of Singapore. This is to bring the blood donation centres closer to donors and make blood donation a way of life for them.

About the Health Sciences Authority

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) applies medical, pharmaceutical and scientific expertise through its three professional groups, Health Products Regulation, Blood Services, Applied Sciences, to protect and advance national health and safety. HSA is a multidisciplinary authority. It serves as the national regulator for health products, ensuring they are wisely regulated to meet standards of safety, quality and efficacy. As the national blood service, it is responsible for providing a safe and adequate blood supply. It also applies specialised scientific, forensic, investigative and analytical capabilities in serving the administration of justice. For more details, visit <http://www.hsa.gov.sg/>. For more updates on public health and safety matters, follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/HSAsg.

The HSA's Blood Services Group, as the national blood service, secures the nation's blood supply by ensuring a safe and adequate blood supply. It is responsible for collecting, processing, testing and distributing blood and blood products to all hospitals in Singapore. It also provides specialist transfusion medicine services in immunohaematology and tissue typing and is actively engaged in the cutting-edge therapeutic research area of cell processing.

About the Singapore Red Cross

As the National Blood Donor Recruiter, the Singapore Red Cross is part of the world's largest humanitarian network, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which comprises 186 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The Movement's work is based on the seven fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

For more information on the National Blood Programme, visit: <http://www.redcross.org.sg/> or <http://donorweb.org/>.

Annex A

Bloodbank@Dhoby Ghaut: Quick Facts at a Glance

Management	Bloodbank@Dhoby is the second fixed satellite blood donation centre. It will be managed by the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) in partnership with the Singapore Red Cross (SRC), the national blood donor recruiter and HSA's strategic partner.
Location	Units B1-05 to 09 at Dhoby Xchange, Dhoby Ghaut MRT Station
Opening Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mondays to Wednesdays: 12noon to 8pm• Fridays to Sundays: 12 noon to 8pm• Closed on Thursdays and Public Holidays
Floor Area	204 sqm
Donation services available	Whole blood donations
Capacity	20 donors per hour
Number of Staff	10
Projected Daily Blood Collections	50 to 80 units
Key Milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site secured: April 2012• Start of Renovation: July 2012• 'Soft' Opening: 17 September 2012• Official Opening: 28 September 2012