

Registry to help combat heart attacks

ABOUT 1,000 people here collapse from sudden cardiac arrest away from medical care every year. Less than 30 survive.

To lower this mortality rate, a new on-line registry has been established by the Singapore Heart Foundation to let people know where the nearest automated external defibrillators (AEDs) are located in public areas like shopping malls, hotels and country clubs.

Cardiac arrests occur when the electrical signal that keeps the heart beating is disrupted, causing the heart to stop.

An AED, which can be used by a person without any training, applies an electric shock to get the heart going again.

It is useful for heart patients and their family members to know where these life-saving devices are located, said Associate Professor Terrance Chua, chairman of the foundation and the National Heart Centre's deputy medical director. The list currently has 70 establishments and the number is expected to grow as more organisations come on board.

AED use here is still low because the devices have started to spring up only in the last two years. There are also not enough people here trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, said Prof Chua.

He hopes these figures will go up with greater awareness. Cities like Seattle in the United States and Gothenburg in Sweden boast cardiac arrest survival rates in excess of 40 per cent. The registry was launched in conjunction with World Heart Day and the annual Heart Fair, which will be held this weekend at the open field beside Causeway Point mall in Woodlands.

A "heart age" calculator has also been launched online for users to assess their risk of cardiovascular disease, which continues to be the top killer here - claiming 15 lives daily. More details can be found on www.myheart.org.sg