

MEDIA RELEASE

Heart health awareness among Singaporean women still low: 2009 Go Red for Women Survey

Singapore, 4 February, 2010 - The Singapore Heart Foundation (SHF), the leading heart health charitable organisation in Singapore, at a press briefing today announced key findings from its 2009 Go Red for Women (GRFW) Heart Health Awareness Survey. The survey was conducted to ascertain trends in awareness, knowledge, attitudes and behavioral changes of women in Singapore.

The latest 2009 GRFW Survey found that many women were not aware of the issues surrounding women and heart disease. Only nine per cent of respondents named heart disease as a leading cause of death and at least a fifth (28 per cent) of the respondents still considered cancer to be the number one killer among Singaporean women. More than a third (34 per cent) named breast cancer specifically.

Over a third (35 per cent) felt that they were at low risk of heart disease for their age and a fifth (20 per cent) did not know if they were at risk or not. As well, 32 per cent did not know women were more likely to die from heart disease after menopause than before.

According to the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, in 2008, heart disease and stroke accounted for over 2,500 female deaths (32.5 per cent) in Singapore. It further indicated that 10.1 per cent of female deaths were due to stroke, higher than 6.1 per cent of men who died from the disease.¹

Troubling as well were indications that knowledge of heart attack symptoms among women was rather low. For example, close to half (42 per cent) of the women polled did not associate chest pains with heart attacks.

The good news is that when asked what behaviours could help prevent or reduce risk of heart disease and stroke, more than 80 per cent identified exercise as a preventive measure followed by reducing stress (64 per cent) and lowering cholesterol (62 per cent).

“This suggests that people do know heart disease and stroke is largely preventable. The health promotion efforts by the Foundation, government and relevant organisations seem to be paying off,” said Dr Goh Ping Ping, the Go Red For Women spokesperson. “Of course there is a lot more that still needs to be done as the findings show that awareness and specific understanding of heart disease and its manifestations are still low,” she emphasised.

¹ Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, Report on Registration of Births and Deaths 2008

Chairman of the SHF, Associate Professor Terrance Chua agreed, adding, “It is encouraging to note that Singaporeans know that exercise is an important form of preventive measure against heart disease. However, awareness levels are still low, and the survey has given us greater insights on where the information and perception gaps are. It will definitely be very useful in helping us focus efforts on bridging those gaps.”

The Go Red for Women campaign runs from February to May, coinciding with Valentine’s Day (February), International Women’s Day (March) and Mother’s Day (May). During this period, SHF will organise various activities to drive awareness of heart disease and urge women to “Put on the little red dress. Go Red for Women!”

The little red dress is the international symbol of the GRFW campaign.

About the Go Red For Women Campaign

The Go Red For Women (GRFW) campaign is an international movement started by the American Heart Association and later adopted by the other World Heart Federation member countries. The Singapore Heart Foundation launched the GRFW campaign in Singapore in 2005 to bring home the heart-health message to women. The campaign aims to empower women – who are gatekeepers to the family’s health – with the right knowledge and tools to take better care of their hearts and their families.

About Singapore Heart Foundation

The Singapore Heart Foundation (SHF) is a non-profit charitable organisation at the forefront of the battle against cardiovascular disease (heart disease and stroke) in Singapore. Since its inception in 1970, the Foundation has grown into a well-established and reputable organisation with local and international links.

SHF fulfils its mission through educational programmes promoting heart health to the public. SHF supports community-based research to better understand the landscape of cardiovascular disease in Singapore. SHF also focuses on rehabilitative and preventive care for recovering heart patients and at-risk individuals. In addition, SHF offers financial assistance to needy heart patients for treatment as well as emergency relief.

For more information, please visit www.myheart.org.sg.

Notes to the editor:

The survey was conducted via a random sample of telephone interviews with women between 21 and 64 years old in Singapore. A total of 1,030 respondents were interviewed and weighted to Singapore’s Women Population aged 21+ (based on the Monthly Digest of Statistics of Singapore Residents by Age Group, Ethnic Group and Gender, End June 2008).

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