

**SPEECH BY BENJAMIN WILLIAM,
SECRETARY GENERAL, SINGAPORE RED CROSS,
WORLD FIRST AID DAY CELEBRATION,
SRC ACADEMY@ATRIUM, 14 SEPTEMBER 2013**

Associate Professor Fatimah Abdul Lateef
Member of Parliament, Marine Parade GRC
Deputy Chairman, Government Parliamentary Committee for Health
Mr Axel Chan, Vice-Chairman, Singapore Red Cross
Ladies and gentlemen

I wish you all a very meaningful and fruitful World First Aid Day!

2 I am glad that each one of you has chosen to spend your Saturday at the Singapore Red Cross Academy, to learn some important lifesaving skills. Today we launch a course that will help caregivers better protect the elderly person in their care. Knowing such skills can prove to be a gift which is more precious than any material gift. For those of you who have elderly parents and grandparents, it is an extension of your sense of filial piety.

3 I would like to share with you why the Singapore Red Cross is advocating first aid learning. We believe that it is a cornerstone to building an empowered and resilient community.

4 The importance of first aid cannot be emphasized enough. In an urban setting like Singapore we can be tempted to be complacent with the thought that medical help will always be at hand. The truth is not that simple. The statistics are telling:

Cardiac arrests

- 1,400 people suffer out-of-hospital heart attacks in Singapore yearly¹.
- Only 20% receive timely CPR.
- Only 3% survive².

¹ BCLS provider manuals, National Resuscitation Council

² CPR+AED and BCLS provider manuals, National Resuscitation Council

Falls

- A third of the people aged 60 and above have fallen more than once. Falls are a major cause of hip fractures.
- More than 20% of patients die in the first year after suffering from a hip fracture.
- More than 25% of older persons require high-level long-term care after suffering such a fracture.

5 Many studies have shown that applying first aid during an emergency makes a crucial difference between life and death. Even in a small country like Singapore, paramedics take time to get to the victim. Providing CPR within 4 minutes following a cardiac arrest helps reduce serious injuries, minimize permanent damage to vital organs, improve chances of recovery and increases the survival rate.

6 The importance of first aid to the elderly community is even more acute. As we get older, we become more vulnerable to accidents. This could be due to pre-existing medical conditions or increased fragility. Strokes and heart attacks are more prevalent among the seniors. It is therefore vital for us as caregivers to be adept in first aid that can help our loved ones facing such emergencies.

7 I am therefore heartened. By being here, you are in agreement with us that it is not good enough that we know to call 995. We should know what to do immediately if our loved one sustains a fall or cut, or loses consciousness. We should also know how to make our homes safer for our charges, so as to prevent accidents.

8 Today we launch three special first aid courses for caregivers of

- The elderly
- The diabetic
- The stroke patients

These first aid offerings stem from

- our concern over the ageing population,
- our desire to empower caregivers and,
- our goal to build community resilience.

9 I am also happy to note that to ensure first aid learning is accessible to everyone, we have partnered with Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) to provide highly subsidized courses for caregivers.

10 Today in celebration of World First Aid Day, we are holding our *first* caregivers course on Elderly First Aid. In the coming weeks we will roll out the courses on Diabetic and Stroke First Aid. For those of you attending the course, I am sure you will acquire important skills and insights to caring for seniors. Please spread the word and inspire others to join these courses.

11 I wish you an enjoyable afternoon. Thank you.