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HIV spread: Handshake used simply as an illustration

WE REFER to Mr George D. Bishop's letter on Monday, 'HIV spread: Not apt to use handshake analogy', and thank him for his feedback.

'Living with HIV' is Standard Chartered's workplace education programme, which is designed to address the myths and misconceptions about HIV and Aids, and to empower people to make informed lifestyle choices.

We have been running this programme - developed and recently updated with the help of a health-care consultancy - for about 10 years now.

The 'Living with HIV' education session covers key points and facts on HIV and Aids by using a mix of mediums that the participants can relate to.

The sessions are interactive rather than instructional, and the facilitator imparts information through the use of quizzes, activities and role-play along with the audience.

The greeting (in this case, an unusual handshake) was used in the Wildfire activity. The handshake in this activity was designed to represent a risky behaviour that may have exposed the participants to the risk of HIV infection. This helps to illustrate how HIV and other sexually transmitted infections can spread very quickly and rapidly.

After the game is played, facilitators will explain to participants how HIV is actually spread and that the handshake is used simply as an illustration as well as to reinforce that HIV cannot be transmitted through social contact, which includes shaking hands.

In closing, we would like to reassure that this programme is designed to dispel myths and misconceptions about HIV and Aids, and encourages support and compassion for those living with HIV.

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05	06	07	08	09	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18

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