

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED TILL 11.30pm, 20 May 2010

Action for AIDS, Singapore awarded the prestigious 2010 Dr Lee Jong-wook Memorial Prize by the World Health Organisation

Singapore 20 May 2010 – The World Health Organization (“WHO”) has awarded the 2010 Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health (“the award”) to Action for AIDS, Singapore (“AfA”).

The award, in recognition of AfA’s outstanding contributions in HIV/AIDS education, care and advocacy, consists of a plaque and an amount of US\$85, 000. It will be presented to Professor Roy Chan, founder and President of AfA, on 20 May 2010 by the President of the Sixty-third World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland.

Dr Lee Jong-wook, a national of the Republic of Korea, was the ex-Director-General of WHO and a prominent public health and HIV/AIDS advocate. He passed away in 2006 and the Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health was established in 2008 by the South Korean government in Dr Lee’s memory and is administered by WHO.

The award is given to persons, institutions, governmental or nongovernmental organizations that have made an outstanding contribution in the areas of research into and prevention, treatment and control of HIV/AIDS; research into and control of communicable diseases; or control of neglected tropical diseases. AfA was nominated by the Ministry of Health for the award this year.

Last year, the award went to the The Georgian Infectious Disease, AIDS and Clinical Immunology Research Center, a governmental institution affiliated with the Department of Public Health of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia.

Said Prof Roy Chan, President of AfA: “In 1986, a group of concerned individuals started a committee to address a new infectious disease called AIDS. We felt that a community-based perspective was urgently needed to meet the challenges presented by AIDS in the traditional and conservative society that Singapore was at that time.

Action for AIDS was subsequently formally registered in 1988 with the mission to promote AIDS prevention, advocacy and support. We have fought HIV-related discrimination on many fronts, including burial rights and right of abode of HIV-infected foreign spouses of citizens. We have worked for universal access to affordable antiretroviral (ARV) drugs therapy, increased access to education and prevention, and have argued for the repeal of the law that criminalises homosexual sex in Singapore.

Over the years, there has been rising awareness and we have seen some changes in the attitudes among Singaporeans towards the issue of HIV and AIDS. But these have been incremental steps and there is a long way to go to dispel the ignorance and fear surrounding

the disease and to overcome the discrimination that remains largely prevalent in our society.

There is obviously still a lot to be done and AfA will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Health, the Health Promotion Board, the Communicable Disease Centre, our community partners and organizations and groups interested in AIDS work and who have been supportive all these years.

AfA is grateful for the prize money which will be used to fund our various educational, care and support programmes. We are also extremely grateful to all our generous sponsors, donors, volunteers, and staff - without whom we would not have been able to have been able to carry out our objectives through the years.”

Prof Chan was conferred the 2009 Queen Elizabeth II Gold Medal by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) for his outstanding contributions to public health and health promotion within the Commonwealth. A specialist in dermatology and sexually-transmitted infections (STI), he has devoted over 20 years to educating Singaporeans about HIV and STI, introduced several effective prevention and awareness programmes, and enhanced care and support for infected persons.

-ENDS

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ABOUT ACTION FOR AIDS, SINGAPORE

www.afa.org.sg

Action for AIDS, Singapore (AfA) was formed in 1988 in response to the development of AIDS and the first report of a case in Singapore in 1986. It is a registered charity whose various support, welfare and educational programmes are managed largely by volunteers and largely funded through donations.

The organization focuses on its AIDS commitment through the constant promotion of prevention education, advocating and providing care and welfare of people living with HIV/AIDS.

To target vulnerable populations on top of the general community, it works alongside the government in designing and implementing prevention, education and outreach programmes.

AfA operates an Anonymous HIV-testing facility in the Singapore, manages the AfA Medication Assistance Programme and Pregnant Mothers Fund and co-ordinates several support groups to assist infected persons who are hospitalised or at home, and their families. Its educational activities include public talks and exhibitions, the development of educational materials, behavioral research and intervention programmes.

ABOUT ROY CHAN

Professor Roy Chan received his medical training at the University of Singapore. He went on to specialise in dermatology at St Johns Hospital in London and in STI and HIV at the University of London and UCLA Dept of Public Health respectively.

He is the Director of the National Skin Centre and was the inaugural chairman of the Chapter of Dermatologists of the Academy of Medicine Singapore. He is the Chair of the Dermatology Specialist Training Committee of the Ministry of Health Singapore.

Roy is the Manager of the National STI Control Programme and a Visiting Senior Consultant in the Office of the Director of Medical Services in Singapore. He is Chairman of the Working Group on HIV and MSM of the Ministry Of Health in Singapore.

He is Regional Director of the International Union against STI Asia Pacific Branch, Past President and Honorary Member of the AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific. In recognition of his work in STI and HIV, he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Gold Medal by the Royal Society of Public Health in 2009.

Roy founded the NGO, Action for AIDS Singapore, in 1988 and is its president. Action for AIDS is the recipient of the 2010 Dr Lee Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health awarded by the World Health Organisation.

He holds an Adjunct Professor appointment at the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, National University of Singapore. He has published over 70 peer reviewed articles and is co-Chief Editor of the journal, Sexual Health.

APPENDIX

THE DR LEE JONG-WOOK MEMORIAL PRIZE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Acceptance Speech by Prof Roy Chan

President of Action for AIDS Singapore

Geneva, 20 May 2010

Embargoed till 11.30pm, 20 May 2010

Please check against delivery.

In 1986, a group of concerned individuals started a committee to address a new infectious disease called AIDS. We felt that a community-based perspective to education, awareness, prevention and support was urgently needed to meet the challenges presented by AIDS in the traditional and conservative society that Singapore was at that time.

Action for AIDS was formed and registered in 1988. From the outset, because we were non-governmental and privately and locally funded, our programme content, delivery and strategies were frank and largely free from unnecessary censorship.

In the area of awareness and education we pushed the message of condom promotion and safer sex. This often attracted criticism from conservative groups and media. But we stuck to our mission and goals.

Public education was communicated through mass media channels, as well as programmes through clubs, group meetings and street and venue-based events. We enlisted the help of pop stars, artists and celebrities to promote safer sex. We utilised drama, pop concerts, pop music, organised AIDS Walks, runs and marathon bicycle rides to create public awareness and to spread the messages.

Aware of our limited resources, we concentrated our efforts to those at highest risk – in Singapore, these include men who have sex with men, street-based sex workers and clients of sex workers. We have also targeted out-of-school youth and especially young MSM who are the most vulnerable.

We raised funds to import and pay for expensive medications – starting in 1990 with aerosolised pentamidine and influenza vaccination. When AZT was introduced, our buyers club hand carried AZT from Australia. The buyers club has now grown to help poor patients obtain generic ARV medications. We started a medication assistance fund to assist needy patients including pregnant mothers to access HAART. We coordinate 3 peer support groups and have just opened a positive living centre.

In order to promote HIV testing we started the anonymous testing service in 1991. The ATS has provided over 100,000 tests to date. In 2007 we started free and anonymous venue-based testing in MSM clubs and saunas, and are now planning for a mobile testing van service.

We have fought HIV-related discrimination on many fronts, including burial rights and right of abode of HIV-infected foreign spouses of citizens. We have worked for universal access to affordable ARV therapy, increased access to education and prevention, and have argued for the repeal of the law that criminalises homosexual sex in Singapore.

Over the last 22 years, we have enjoyed the support and generosity of a very large number of individuals, businesses and organisations. We are now also receiving significant support and recognition from the Singapore government. None of our achievements would have been possible if not for the dedication and effort of volunteers, many of whom were and are HIV-positive. Our volunteer board has provided guidance and direction, and our tireless staff and volunteers have laboured to transform that into action.

It is for all them, and for the people of my country that I proudly and at the same time very humbly receive this award. On behalf of Action for AIDS Singapore, I would like to thank the Singapore Ministry of Health for nominating us, and to the awards committee of the Dr Lee Jong-Wook Memorial Prize for Public Health for this great honour.

Thank you

-ENDS

Explanatory Notes

AZT :

Azidothymidine (AZT) is a type of antiretroviral drug, and was the first approved treatment for HIV, sold under the names Retrovir and Retrovis. AZT use was a major breakthrough in AIDS therapy in the 1990s that significantly altered the course of the illness and helped destroy the notion that HIV/AIDS was an instant death sentence. AZT slows HIV spread significantly, but does not stop it entirely. This allows HIV to become AZT resistant over time, and for this reason AZT is usually used in conjunction with other anti-viral drugs.

ARV & HAART :

Antiretroviral drugs (ARV) are medications for the treatment of infection by retroviruses, primarily HIV. When several such drugs, typically three or four, are taken in combination, the approach is known as highly active antiretroviral therapy, or HAART.

ATS :

The Anonymous HIV Testing and Counselling Service which is run by Action for AIDS, Singapore at the DSC Clinic at Block 31 Kelantan Lane, #01-16, Singapore 200031.

MSM :

Men who have sex with men.