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New poll shows 1 in 5 smokers light up in public toilets

- **Pfizer collaborates with Restroom Association (Singapore) to tackle problem in a new anti-smoking initiative**

Singapore, 25 November, 2009: A new street poll commissioned by Pfizer (Singapore) and the Restroom Association (Singapore) on 288 smokers revealed that 1 in 5 smokers in Singapore had smoked or would do so in a public toilet.

In spite of Singapore's smoking ban, smokers said the most common reasons for smoking in public toilets included "to save time by multi-tasking in the toilet" or because public toilets were "the most convenient place to smoke." The majority of such smokers would also dispose of their cigarette butts in the toilet bowl.

Toilets at coffee shops, followed by toilets in pubs and clubs, were observed by non-smokers in a separate poll as the most common locations with cigarette burn marks or littered butts.

In light of the findings, Pfizer (Singapore) – a leading pharmaceutical firm – and the Restroom Association (Singapore) have joined hands to implement a public awareness drive to discourage smokers from lighting up in public toilets. From December, all 24,500 public toilets across Singapore will display posters underlining the harm of nicotine addiction, encouraging smokers to overcome their cravings and quit the habit by calling the Health Promotion Board Quitline or seek help from a doctor or healthcare professional. This public messaging initiative is supported by the Health Promotion Board as part of the Association's Happy Toilet Programme (HTP)¹.

¹ *The Happy Toilet Programme (HTP) is an initiative launched in July 2003 to award public toilets a three, four or five star rating for their standards and excellence. A minimum three-star rating ensures toilets are kept dry, odourless, and litter-free with working toilet facilities and basic amenities such as soap and toilet paper.*

The good news is, smokers who light up in public toilets said that there are deterrents to discourage them from smoking. More than one-third of such smokers (36.5%) said that while a heavy fine would be the most effective deterrent, at least a third (30.2%) felt that they would not smoke in the public toilet if it was very clean and nice-smelling.

Commenting on this joint collaboration, Ms Christina Teo, Pfizer Singapore's General Manager said, "We recognize the tough challenge that smokers face in quitting the habit and hence it is important to remind them of the help and support available in their arduous but very achievable task to quit. As the leader in smoking cessation prescription therapy, Pfizer is committed to helping people live a 'smoke-free' lifestyle to improve their health and well-being."

Smoking is the single most preventable cause of death. The earlier smokers quit, the greater the health benefit. In Singapore, more than seven people die each day (equivalent to more than 2,600 deaths a year) from smoking-related diseases.² From an earlier survey commissioned by Pfizer in 2007, more than 60 per cent of smokers considered themselves "addicted to nicotine", or dependent on cigarettes to get them through the day. A large proportion also found it difficult to quit smoking due to physical or psychological dependence on smoking.

"Nicotine addiction is a serious, physical and psychological medical condition which requires professional medical help. Studies have also shown that tobacco can be harder to quit than heroin and cocaine," added Ms Teo.

On a lighter note, the Restroom Association (Singapore)'s president, Tan Puay Hoon shared that toilet cleanliness is a concerted effort not just by operators and cleaners but by users as well. "Smoking is prohibited in public toilets but we also want to help smokers kick this harmful and addictive habit through this initiative. We are encouraged that many corporations are actively supporting our Happy Toilet Programme."

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² Chan, MF. (2001). *Community efforts to "leave the pack behind". International Symposium on "Tobacco or Health" 1999. Japan: WHO Kobe Centre. Retrieved May 12, 2007, from <http://www.who.or.jp/ageing/>*

NOTES TO EDITOR

About Pfizer (Singapore)

Founded in 1849, Pfizer is the world's largest research-based pharmaceutical company taking new approaches to better health. We discover, develop, manufacture and deliver quality, safe and effective prescription medicines to treat and help prevent disease for both people and animals. We also partner with healthcare providers, governments and local communities around the world to expand access to our medicines and to provide better quality health care and health system support. At Pfizer, more than 80,000 colleagues in more than 90 countries work every day to help people stay happier and healthier longer and to reduce the human and economic burden of disease worldwide.

About Restroom Association (Singapore)

Restroom Association (Singapore) or RAS' vision is Clean Public Toilets for Everyone. Started in 1998 as a non-profit organization, RAS is dedicated to promoting good design, cleanliness and maintenance in public toilets. It serves the community by educating the general public about toilet etiquette. Some of the programmes – supported by the National Environment Agency (NEA) - conducted by RAS include the Happy Toilet Programme, the Happy Toilet School Education programme, NSRS in clean sanitary fittings & fixtures and strategic partner in national community events like Clean & Green Singapore. RAS is also a founding member of the World Toilet Organization.

Fact Sheet on Street Poll

1) About the poll

288 smokers and 74 non-smokers were involved in this poll commissioned by Pfizer (Singapore) and Restroom Association (Singapore) in August 2009. Comprising more males (67%), the ages of respondents are mainly 20 to 50 years. The poll was conducted in the central areas of Singapore with high human traffic.

2) Why it was commissioned

Pfizer (Singapore) and the Restroom Association (Singapore) wanted to better understand Singaporeans' smoker habits and opinions as well as observations and opinions of non-smokers in the public toilet. This was also aimed at verifying the situation of smoking habits in the public toilets.

3) Findings on smoker habits and opinions

3.1.) 1 in 5 (18.8%) respondents indicated that they had smoked in the public toilet while 3.8% of respondents said they would smoke in the public toilet.

- a) The most common reasons for doing so were to "save time by multi-tasking in the toilet" and it was "the most convenient place to smoke".
- b) Most of such smokers (82.5%) would dispose their cigarette butts in the toilet bowl.
- c) A third of such smokers felt that they would not smoke in the public toilet if it was "very clean and nice-smelling".

3.2) Most of the 288 respondents felt that imposing "penalty such a heavy fine" would generally (55.6%) and personally (36.5%) be the most effective deterrent for smoking in the public toilet.

3.3) 79.2% of all the smokers surveyed usually "smoked outside the office during the work day" and 71.2% also tended to smoke in "social settings with friends".

3.4) 43.4% of all the smokers surveyed would usually smoke anytime be it during work or after meals, whether to kill time or relieve stress.

4) Findings on non-smoker opinions and observations

4.1) At least 8 out of 10 non-smokers had ever observed cigarette burn marks or butts littered in public toilets.

a) Toilets at coffee shops (84.1%) were noted as the most common locations with cigarette burn marks or littered butts. Toilets in pubs and clubs (27%), followed by shopping malls (19%) were the next common locations.

b) Most (81%) cigarette burn marks or butts littered were found in the toilet bowls. The next common spot was the toilet floor.

4.2) Majority (50%) of the 74 respondents felt that imposing “penalty such a heavy fine” would generally be the most effective deterrent for smoking in the public toilet. 27% felt that educating the users on good public toilette etiquette could be an effective.

5) Implications of street poll findings

5.1) Although a minority smokes in the public toilet, it has its impact on at least 8 out of 10 public toilet users.

5.2) Though the majority of smokers and non-smokers felt that imposing a “penalty such as a heavy fine” would be the most effective deterrent for smoking in the public toilet, the level of “ease in getting caught”, “smoke detectors” and “educating the public” could be factors that go hand-in-hand to be effective.

5.3) The poll revealed that maintaining the cleanliness and nice fragrance in the toilets has its positive effects to deter smoking in public toilets (almost 10% more smokers identified this as one of their effective personal deterrent).

5.4) More efforts may be required of the operators for the public toilets located in coffee shops as well as pubs and clubs.

THIS TOILET IS VYING FOR THE HAPPY TOILET STAR RATING...



You Can Help By Not Smoking Here

There are many ways to overcome your cravings and **QUIT SMOKING** for good.

Ask your Doctor or Healthcare Professional to find out more.

Cigarettes are addictive. Studies have shown that tobacco can be harder to quit than heroin*. Your healthcare professional can help you overcome your tobacco addiction.

Your consideration will make visiting this toilet a pleasant experience for all.

Smoking in public toilets is prohibited by law.



*David N et al. Development of a rational scale to access the harm of drugs of potential misuse. Lancet 2007; 369: 1047-1053