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Social media way to curb AIDS

To educate the youth about HIV/AIDS and equip them with the right information — that's what the #SOMEBODYLIKEME campaign is all about

IN 1981, when the US Centres for Disease Control Prevention highlighted the case of a rare lung infection in Los Angeles affecting five previously healthy youths, it marked the first official reporting of what will become known as the AIDS epidemic.

Fast forward to this year. HIV/AIDS remains as one of the greatest threats to global health. In Malaysia, the Health Ministry has revealed that 31 per cent of the new 3,438 HIV cases in Malaysia are young people aged between 13 and 29 in 2012.

Females have also become increasingly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. In 1990, a female accounted for one in every 100 new HIV infections. However in 2012, the numbers increased to one in every four new reports, an estimated 25 per cent in 2012.

"The statistics are indeed worrying and despite the global attention on HIV/AIDS, it is disconcerting that local youths are not equipped with sufficient knowledge, they feel that HIV/AIDS is irrelevant to them. Rife with ignorance, what we see now is that the infection seems to be spread-

ing among youths," says Abhishek Chuckerbutty, marketing director of Reckitt Benckiser Malaysia and Singapore.

"In response to this, Durex Malaysia has introduced the #SOMEBODYLIKEME campaign, targeted mainly at youths. Our goal is simple — to educate youths to understand that HIV/AIDS can infect and affect anyone, including 'somebody like me'," Abhishek adds.

"By educating and equipping young Malaysians with the right information and knowledge, we want

them to take charge and spread the awareness among their family, peers and the community. We are encouraging them to discuss and air their concerns on issues surrounding HIV/AIDS, to make informed decisions which will prevent its spread."

CONNECTING FOR CHANGE

The #SOMEBODYLIKEME Campaign is an awareness campaign in partnership with PT Foundation and AIESEC Malaysia aimed at educating youths on HIV/AIDS through social media.

Leveraging on social media's pervasive nature, the campaign mobilises youths nationwide to discuss issues pertaining

to HIV/AIDS and educate their peers on the topic on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Blogs.

As an added impact, Durex currently works with prominent influencers in social media including Datuk Paduka Marina Mahathir, Niki Cheong, Reuben Kang, KlubbKidd KL a.k.a. Joe Lee, Audrey Pui Yan, Karena Cheow, Hanie Hidayah and Christopher Tock.

Videos featuring some of the social influencers were also featured on YouTube and Facebook as an alternative educational tool for youths to trigger realisation on the danger of HIV/AIDS.

"We are focusing our attention on the digital route this time as it is an essential platform to engage with youth today. Social media is an excellent avenue to help empower conversations on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and with influencers of stature, including Datuk Paduka Marina Mahathir leading the con-

versation, we are reaching out to a large group of followers," he adds.

"We believe that each of us should be actively involved in the

fight against HIV/AIDS via the digital platform as it builds a strong online community, which has a shared interest in working towards finding a solution. The energy and dynamism of the youth today present a great opportunity for change to happen," he adds.

Over and above the awareness programme, Durex together with retailers Watsons and Guardian Pharmacy are also raising funds for PT Foundation to support its HIV/AIDS advocacy and educational programmes.

FIGHTING STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

In January 2005, when former South African president the late Nelson Mandela in the garden of his Johannesburg home announced to the media the cause of his son's death, he said: "To keep the illness secret would wrongly imply that it is shameful. Let us give publicity to HIV/AIDS, and not hide it."

Mandela called for a renewed fight

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to challenge the taboo and stigma that surrounds the disease.

“It is quite ironic that we realise that the HIV/AIDS does not discriminate, but sadly, people do. With the revolutionary advances in medicines, we have the adequate tools to help those suffering from HIV/AIDS. However, we now seem to have another phenomenal challenge — stigma and indifference,” says PT Foundation acting executive officer Raymond Tai.

“We seem indifferent that we are all at risk as it could happen to anyone, but most often, we rather not address it,

“On the other side of the coin, we need to tackle the HIV/AIDS stigma where most individuals dare not get themselves tested or let anyone know about their lives, as they are

afraid of being labelled or judged,” he added.

“To eradicate stigma and discrimination, we need to increase education, stimulate support, and build respect as well as a spirit of inclusiveness.

A campaign like #SOMEBODYLIKEME is ideal as we are reaching towards our youth to help them comprehend that their affirmative action today will act as a fuel to change perceptions, in order to shape an era that promotes an inclusive society and embrace diversity in its actuality,” Tai added.

AGENT OF CHANGE

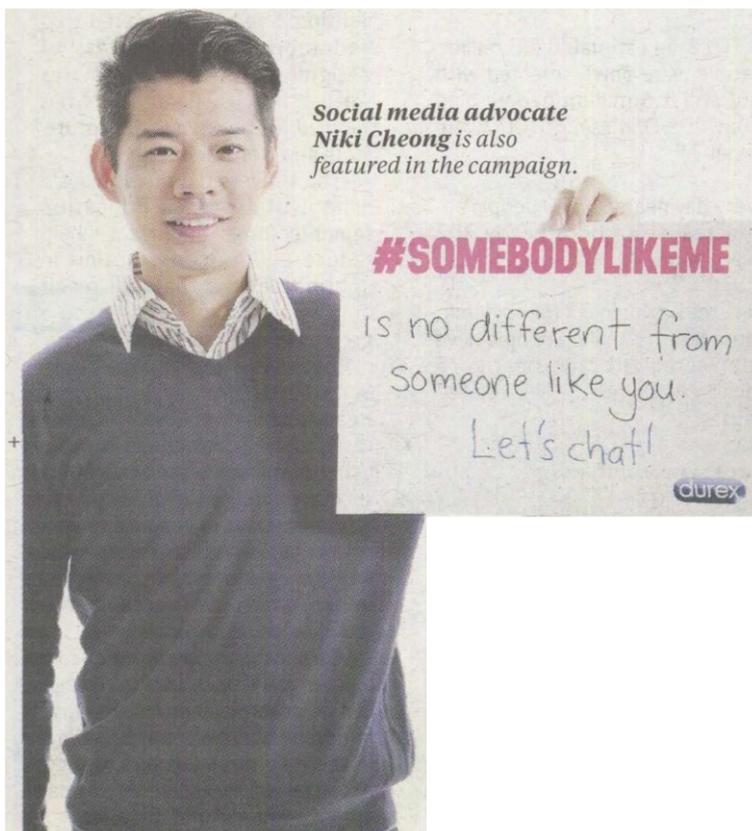
WHILE researchers believe that they can finally see the beginning of the end of the pandemic — a cure in our lifetime — we are not there yet. Education and awareness on HIV/AIDS needs to be amplified to reverse the spread of the disease.

Join Durex Malaysia in the fight against HIV/AIDS by educating your friends about the pandemic. Simply update your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube or blogs on issues surrounding HIV/AIDS, with the (hashtag)SOMEBODYLIKEME, until the last day of the campaign on Dec 15.

To learn more about the #SOMEBODYLIKEME Campaign, visit Durex Malaysia’s Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, at www.facebook.com/DurexMalaysia, www.twitter.com/DurexMY or www.youtube.com/user/durexmalaysia.

You may also visit PT Foundation’s website at www.ptfmalaysia.org to educate yourself about HIV and AIDS.

“HIV/AIDS does not discriminate but sadly, people do.”
Raymond Tai



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Marina is one of the **social influencers** in the campaign.



Abhishek says the **infection** is spreading among the youth.

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